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**JESSICA
SIMPSON**

★ "I'M NEVER EVER GONNA QUIT//CAUSE QUITTIN' JUST AINT MY SCHTICK" ★



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SEPTEMBER 2003
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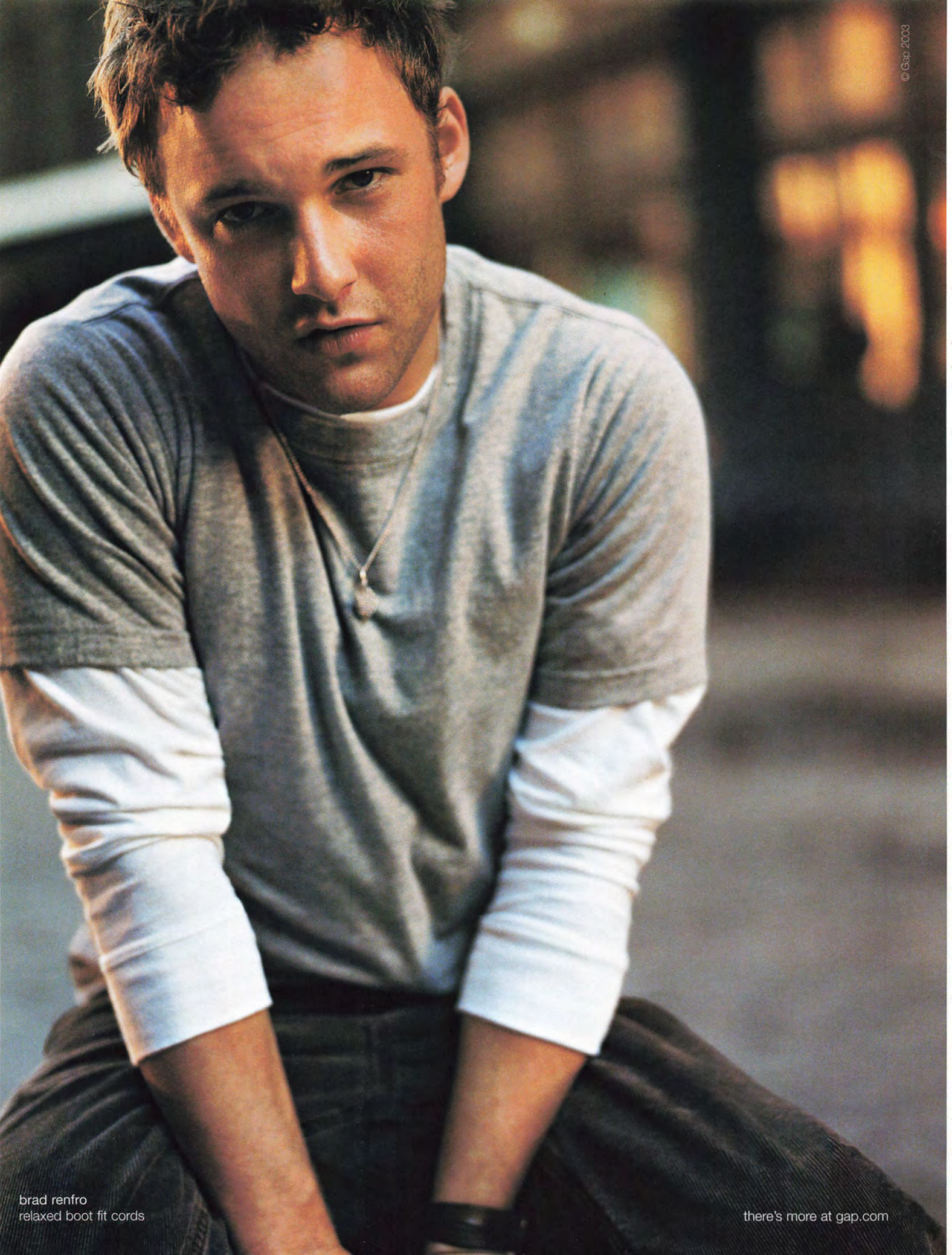




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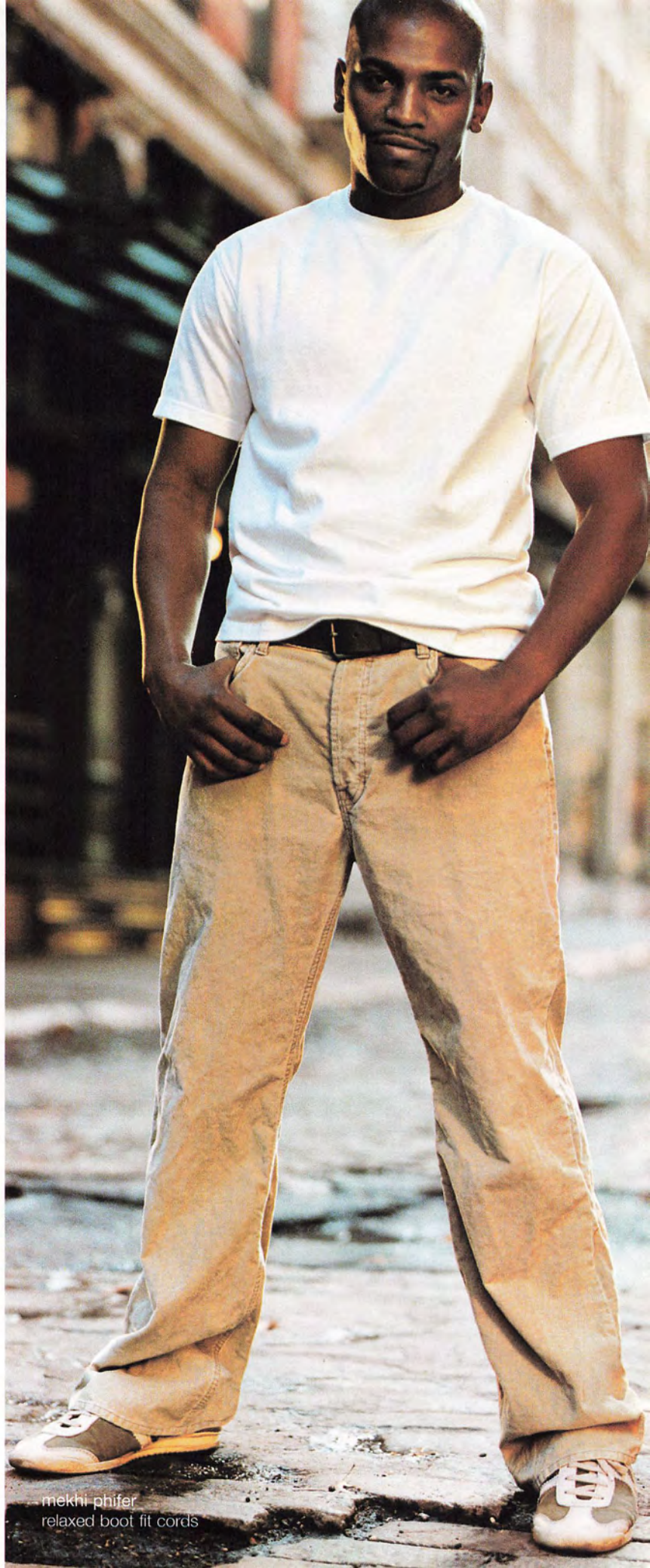
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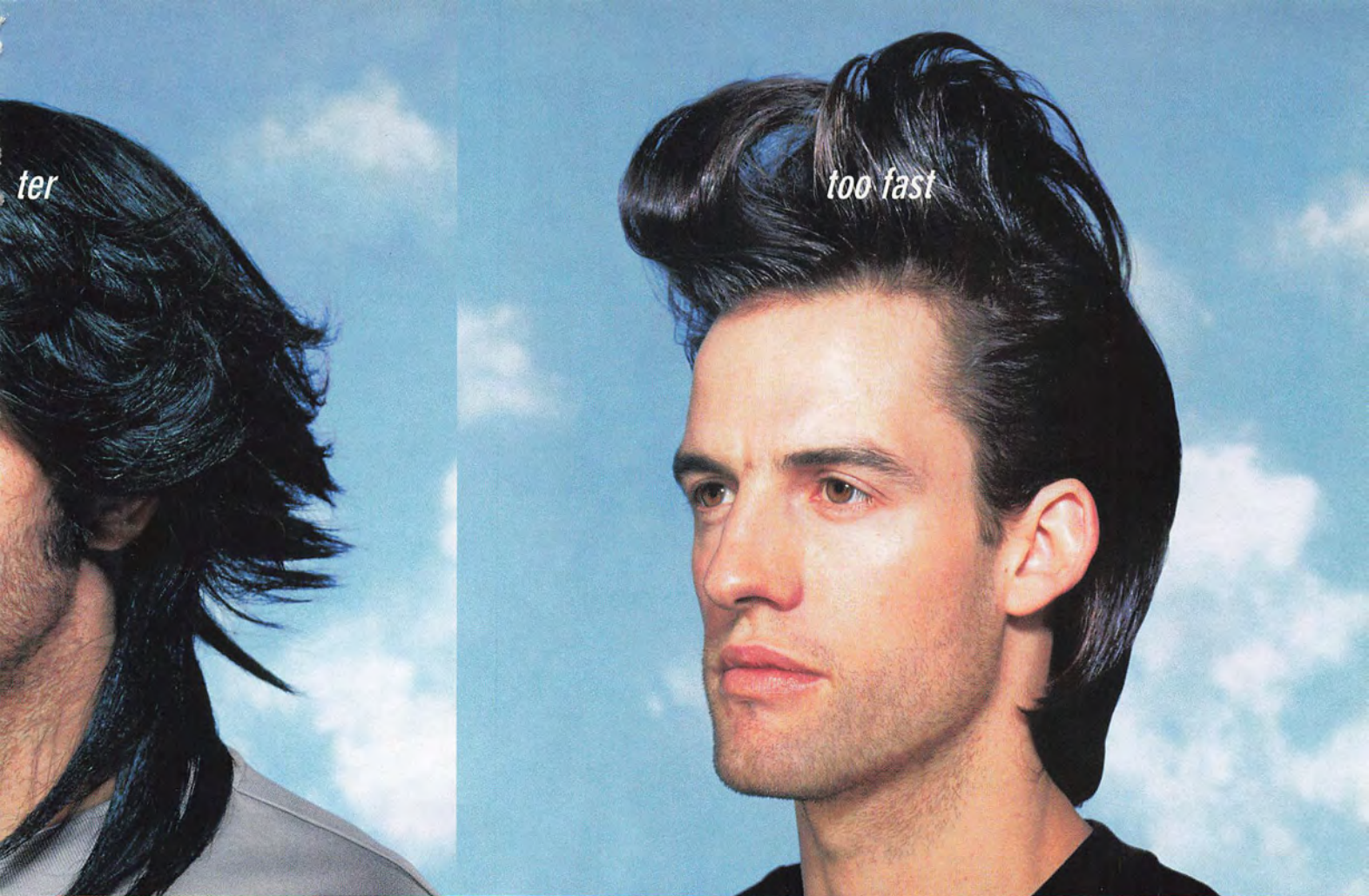
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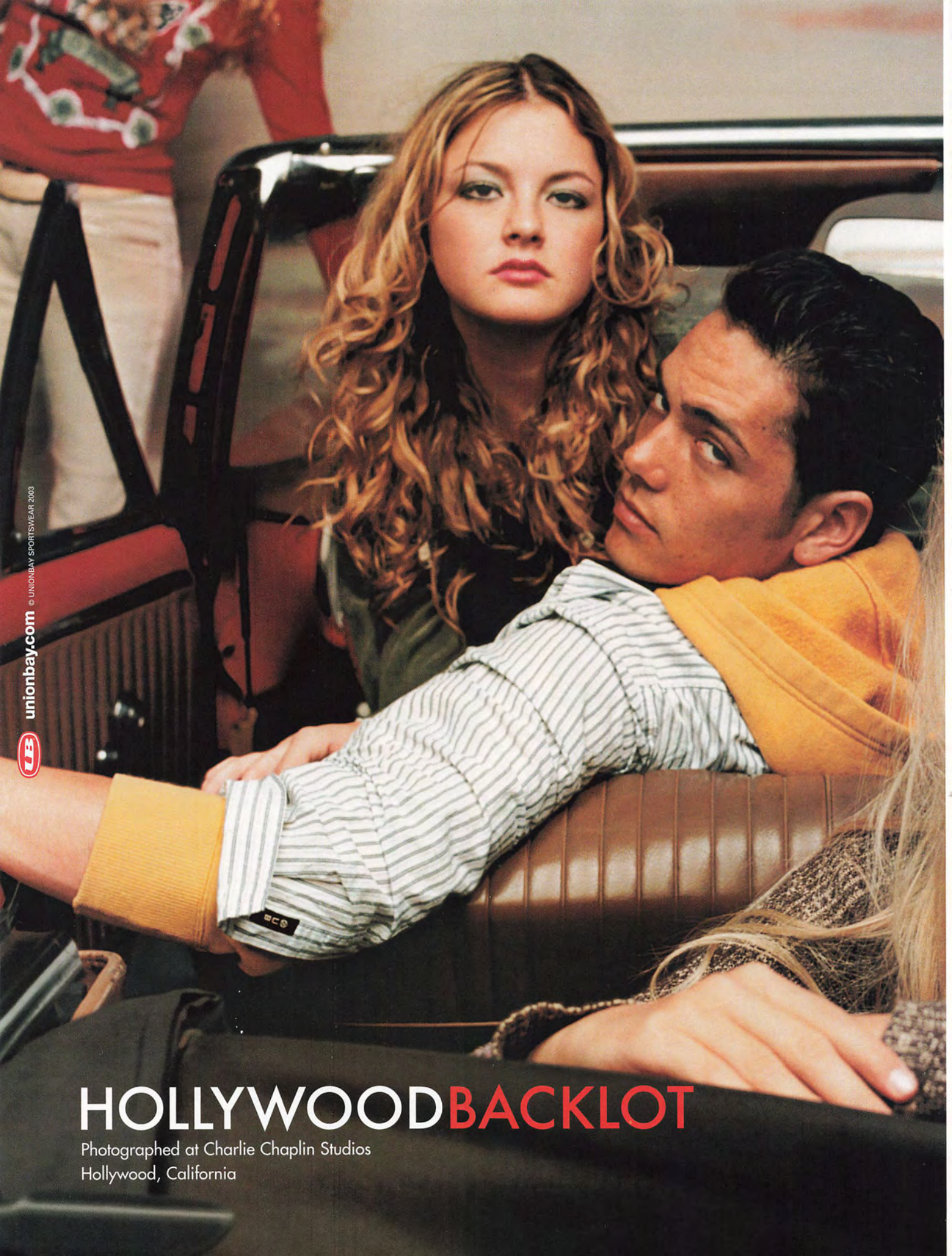


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FEATURES >>

78 JESSICA SIMPSON

She's the girl next door — provided, of course, that you live next door to someone who has published a book about hosting the perfect celebrity wedding and has an MTV camera crew tracking her every move.

82 THE 50 WORST ARTISTS IN MUSIC HISTORY!

It's the one critics' list that no one wants to be on. Which will come as rather bad news for Creed, the Insane Clown Posse, Oingo Boingo and 47 other stinkers.

90 S848: JUNIOR SENIOR

Can the Danish dance-pop duo really squander almost a grand of *Blender's* cash on booze, hot dogs, '70s porn and condiments? Yes!

92 DASHBOARD
CONFESSIOAL

Don't date Chris Carrabba — unless you want your excruciating breakup splayed all over the next Dashboard Confessional lyric sheet.

96 33 THINGS ABOUT
MARY J. BLIGE

She used to dream of being a stripper. She signed her first record deal in a laundry room. She wants you to give her a hug. But despite the rumors, the R&B diva is most definitely *not* a man.

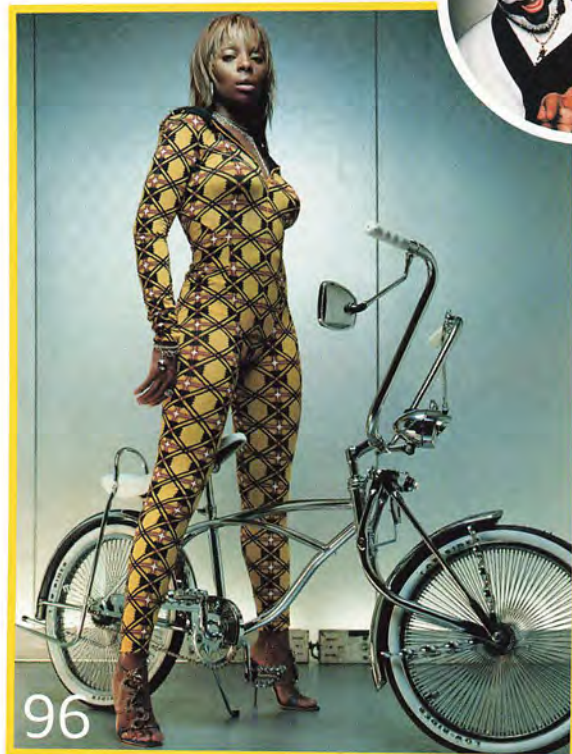
102 HOW TO BE A ROCK MANAGER

With help from New Jersey popsters Fountains of Wayne, *Blender* discovers that managing a rock band isn't nearly as easy as it looks. And to be honest, it didn't look too easy in the first place.

106 RADIOHEAD

If Thom Yorke really is rock's Mr. Misery, then what's all this about geisha girls and champagne? "Welcome to my world," chuckles the Radiohead frontman.

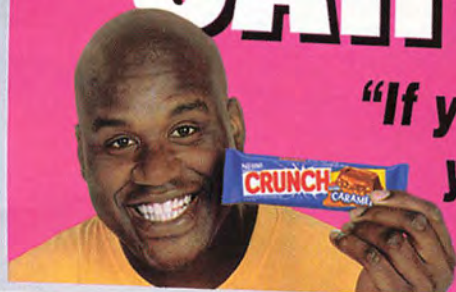
➤ **"Radiohead isn't a democracy."** THOM YORKE, p.106



For Blender's August cover, the makeup credit should have read **MALLY RONCAL FOR SEPHORA/CONTACT**. We regret the error.

On the cover: Chris Bolt/FilmMagic.com (Simpson), Photodisc Green (geisha), Alphonse Telymonde (still-life), Photodisc/Getty Images (rabbit), Martin Schoeller/Corbis Outline White) This page: James Dimmock (Yorkie), Joshua Kessler/Petra Ltd. (Incanco Chew Dress), Lukson Baker (Sennock), Robert Maxwell (Blaze), Leon Fountains of Warrne)

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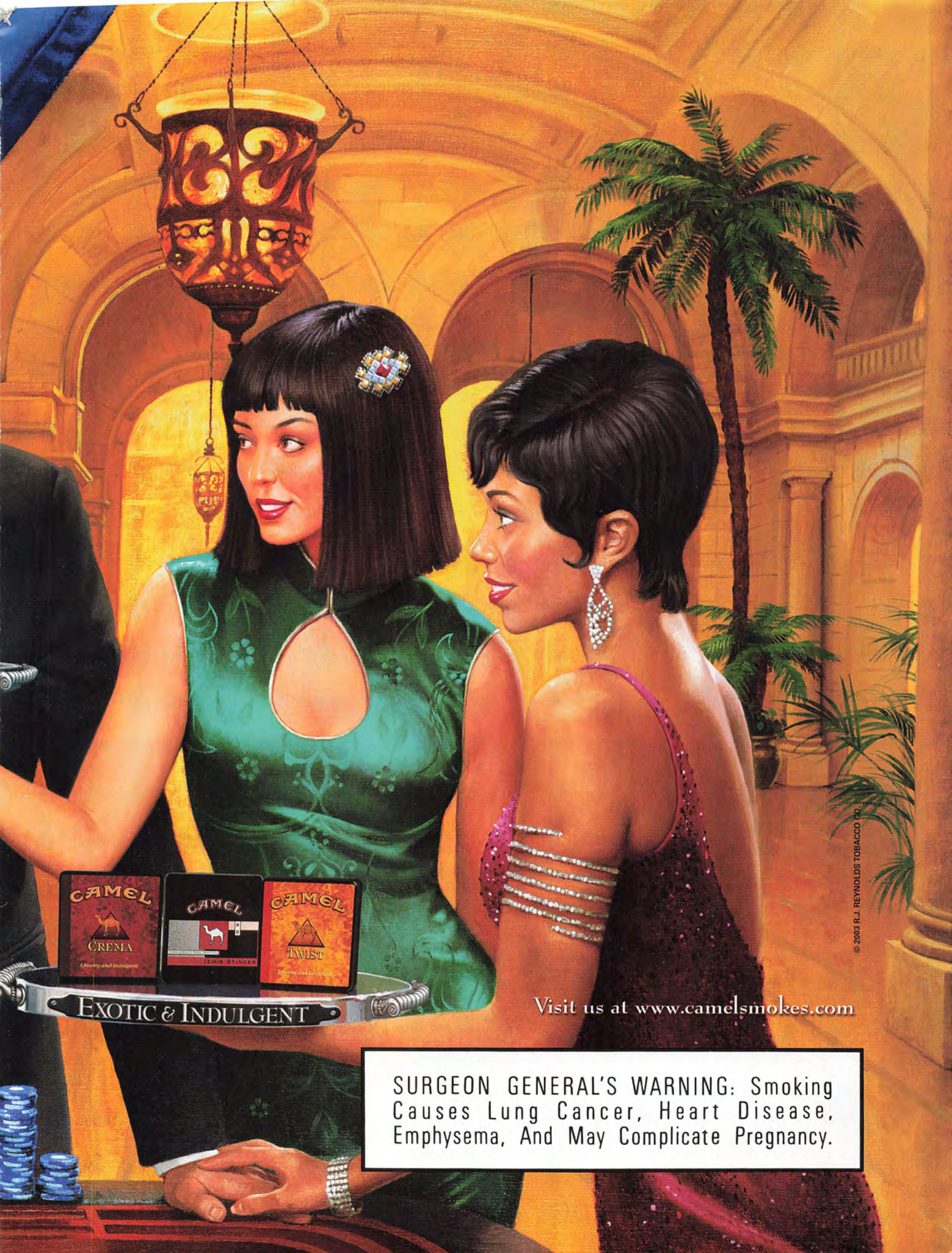
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42 BURNER

Is Snoop Dogg in the crosshairs?; Avril flashes ass and attitude; the Libertines implode; ODB's in trouble with Mom; and so much more, you'll beg for mercy!

48 THE NEXT BIG THING!

Eisley; Obie Trice

68 DEAR SUPERSTAR

The "runaway son of a nuclear A-bomb" fearlessly answers your queries about the Stooges' reunion, sponge baths with David Bowie and the size of his manhood.

74 THE GREATEST SONGS EVER!

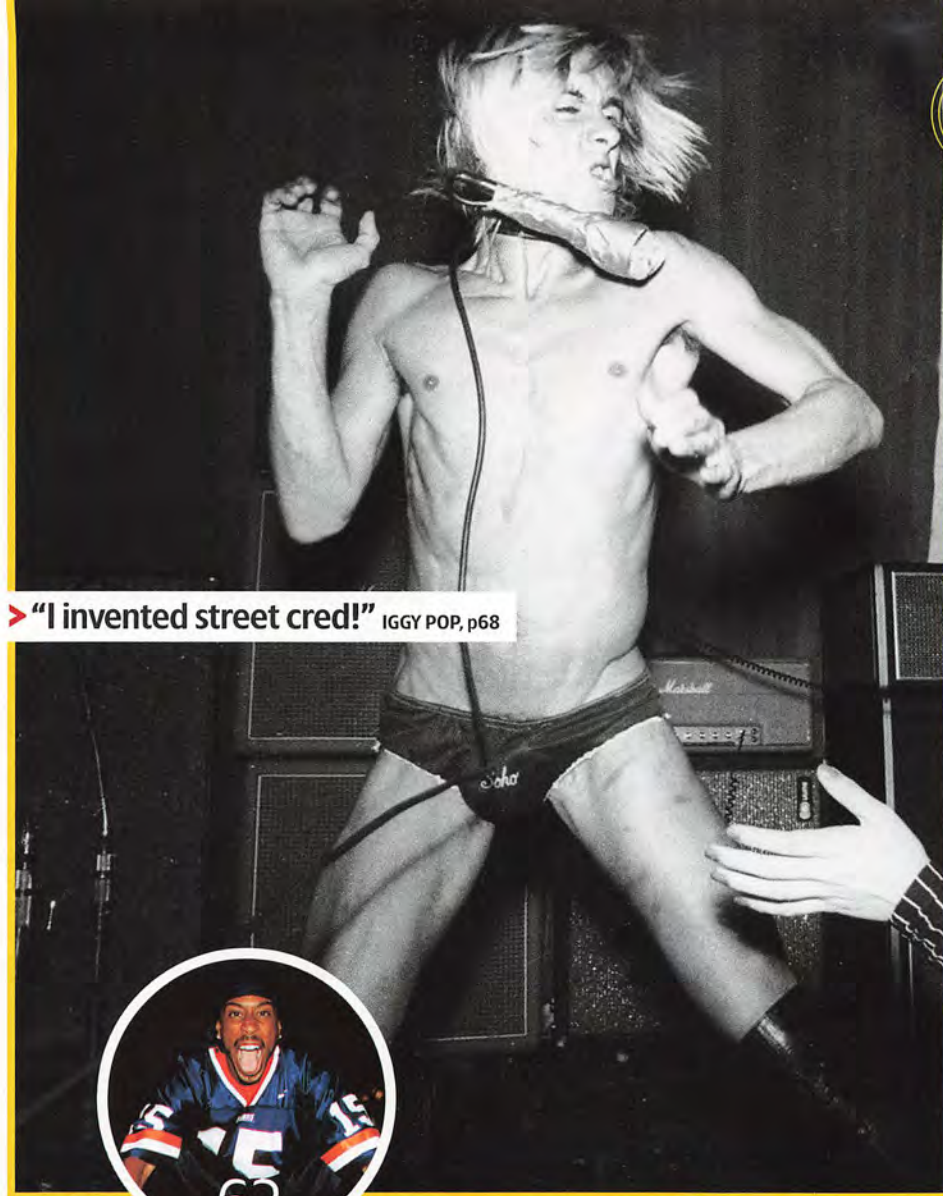
Seeking spiritual uplift in 1973, Stevie Wonder wrote "Higher Ground." Did it eerily predict the car accident that nearly killed him?

76 ASK BLENDER

Did John Lennon dis Mick and Marianne? What is "Hotel California" really about? And were Jacko and Sheryl Crow once — eeeww — an item?

160 WHO DOES SEAL THINK HE IS?

He owes his career to bullies, likes to say *fuck* and wouldn't mind being Jennifer Connelly — so he could have sex with his friends.



> "I invented street cred!" IGGY POP, p68



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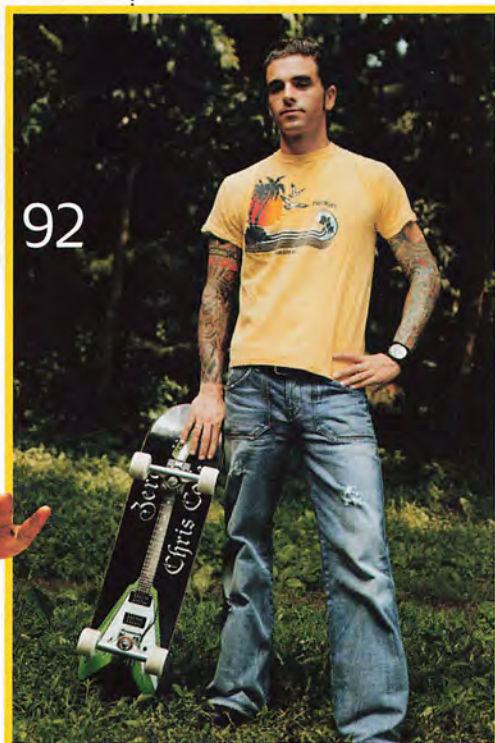


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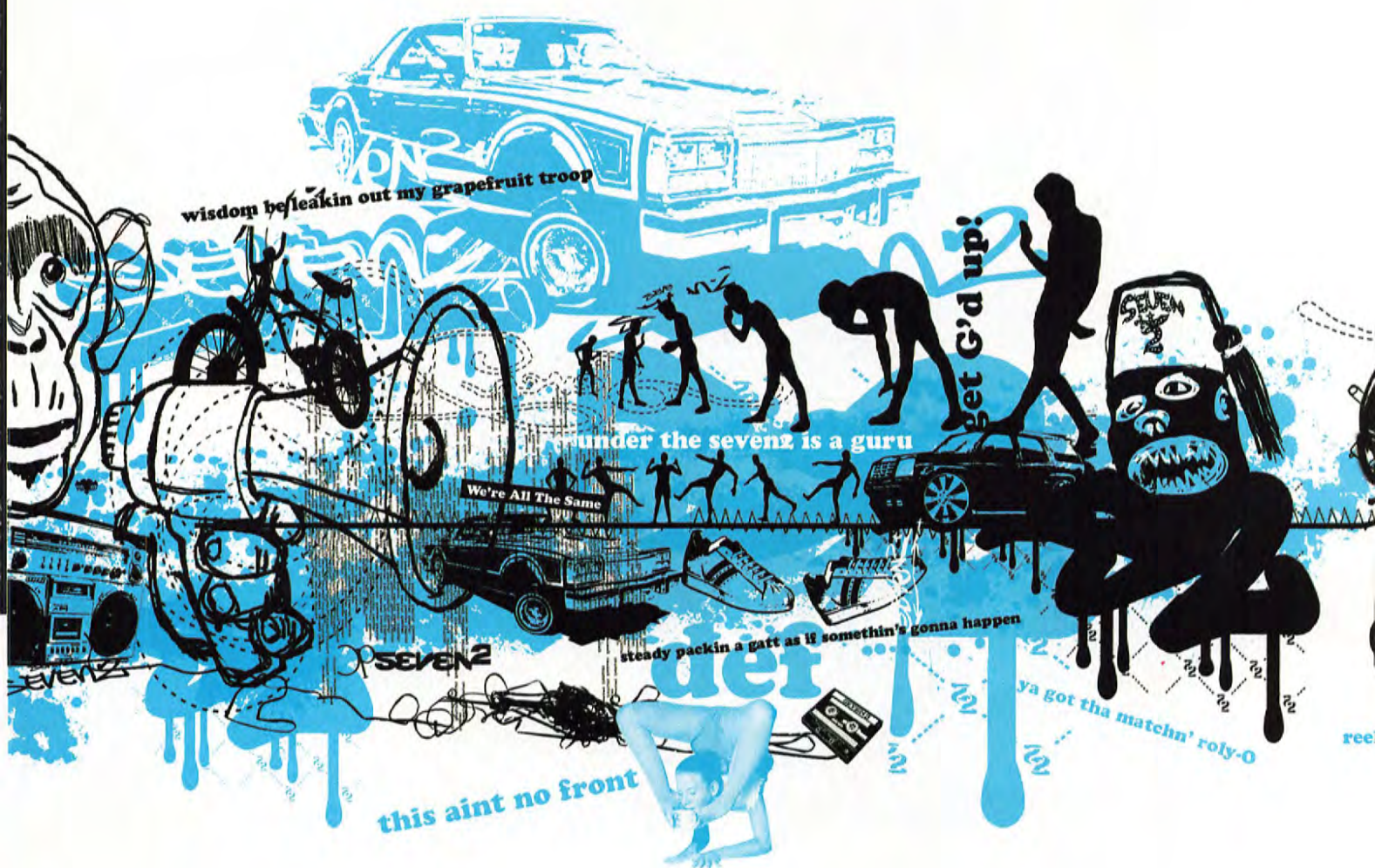
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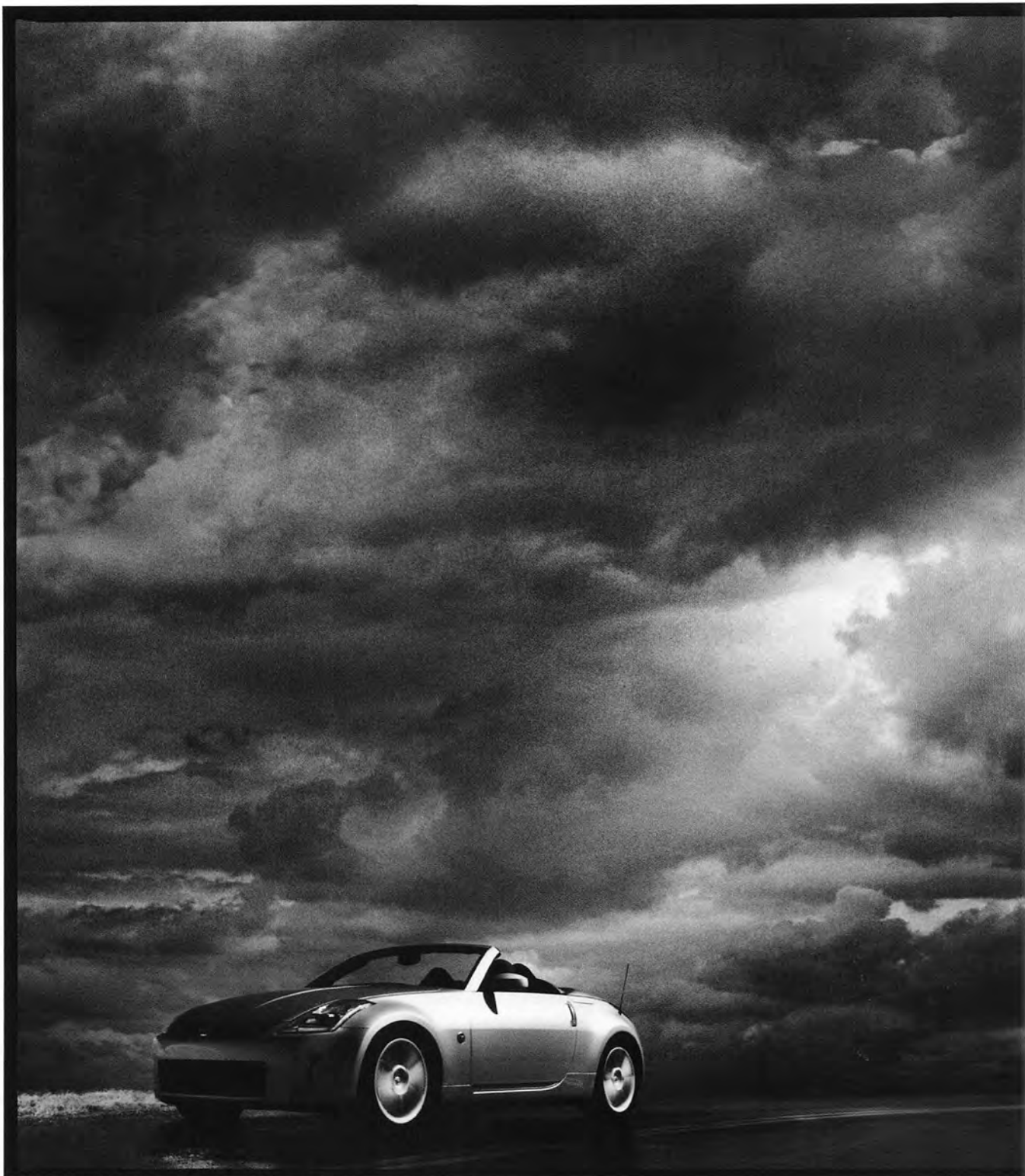
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> "Led Zeppelin IV was the first album I stole." GINA GERSHON, p136



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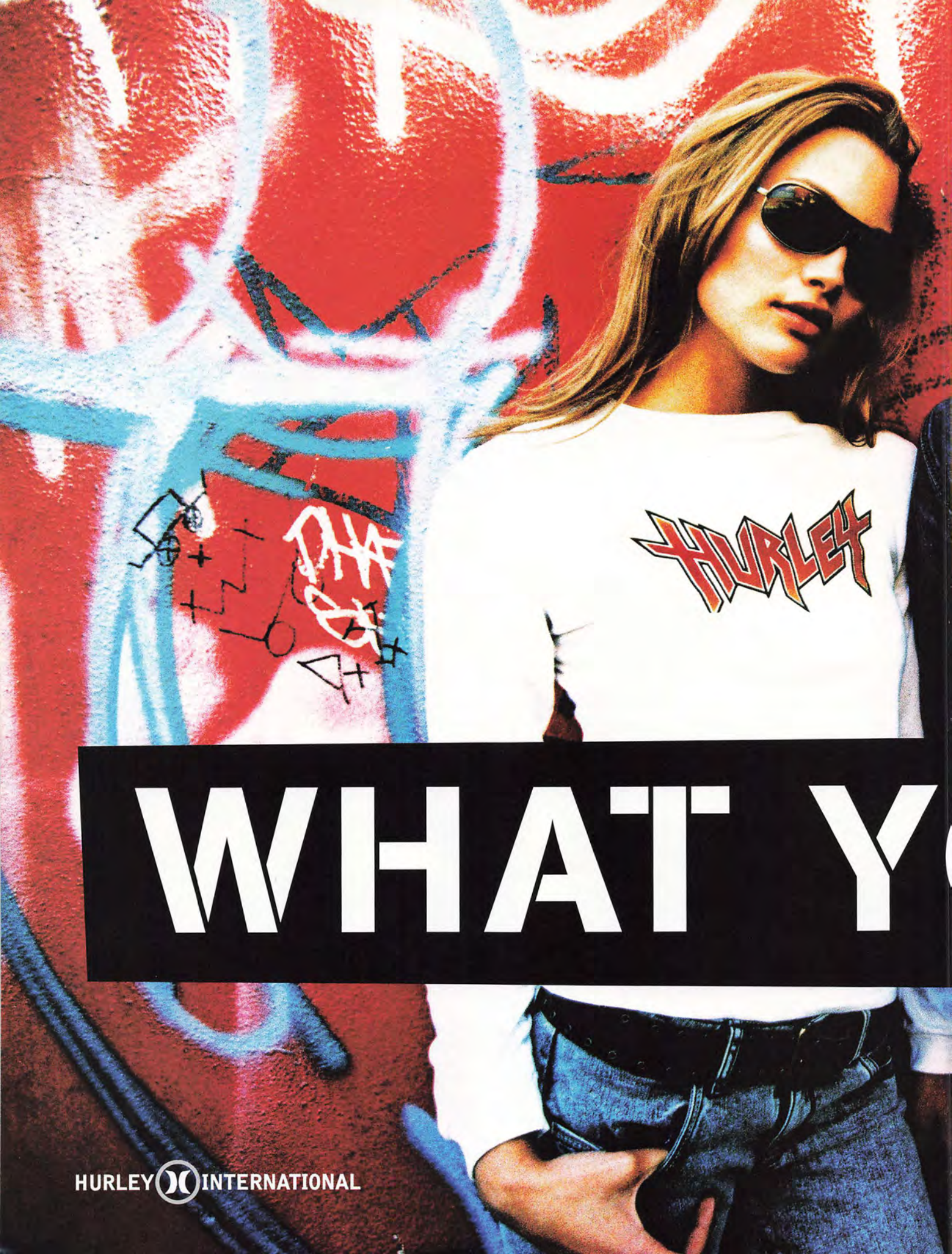
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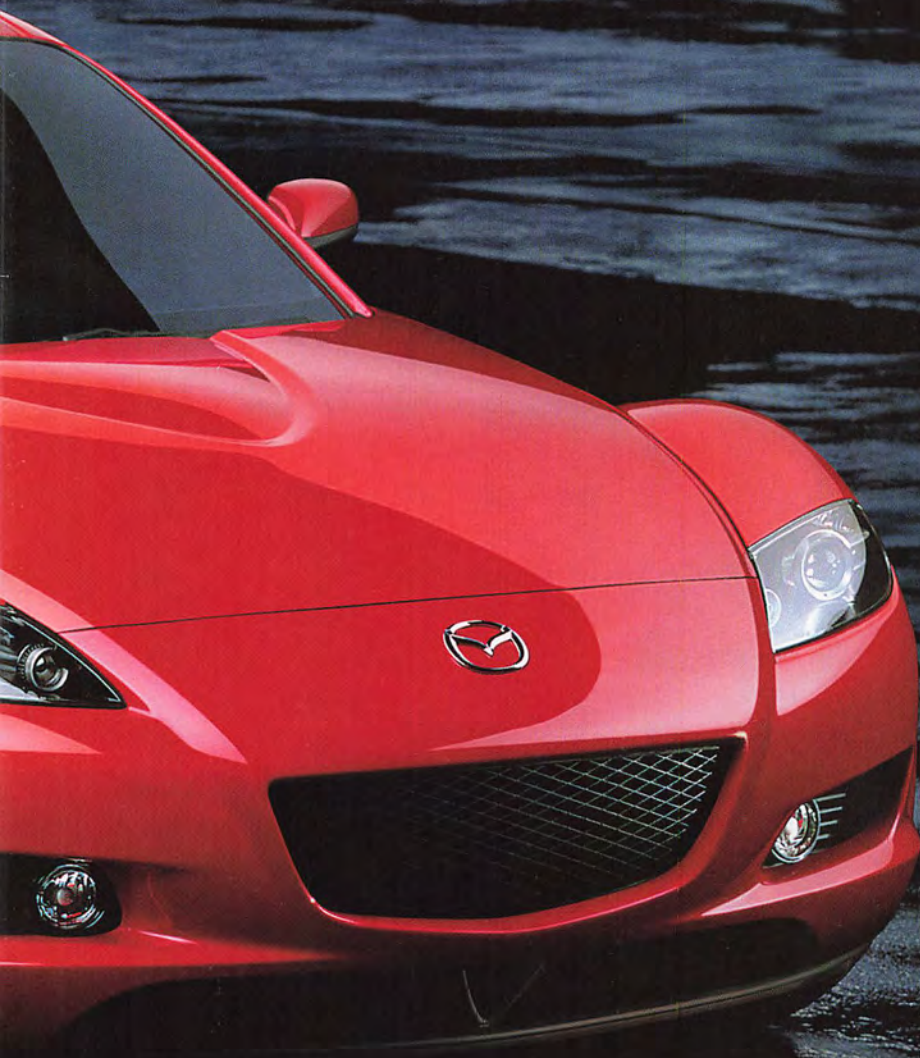
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HOW TO COMPLETELY SUCK



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» WHAT DOES IT take to be really bad at something? I'm not talking about mild incompetence or even entry-level ineptitude. No, I'm talking about being so resolutely devoid of talent, skill or even basic coordination that an average passerby would stop to marvel at such a unique example of form and function working entirely against each other.

Imagine a slightly less useful Detroit Tigers. That sort of thing.

Obviously, incompetence is something a VIP type like me has almost no experience with. That's why I decided to

do a little research. In this issue, we highlight the 50 most godawful bands ever to disgrace a stage. After studying this fascinating list, a few universal do's and don'ts for aspiring young bands clearly emerge.

But there is one, I think, that everyone — both musicians and "normal" people alike — should bear in mind: Never, never, never wear a leather loincloth!

I hope you enjoy the issue. And Manowar, if you're reading, I'm sorry.

ANDY PEMBERTON
EDITOR IN CHIEF



» Manowar, if you're reading this, I'm sorry. . . .



THE ORIGINAL SKATE SHOE

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4

THE **TNT** BY TONY TRUJILLO



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SADLY APPROPRIATE

How sadly appropriate that the lyric on the spine of your August issue ("I fell for you like a child/Oh, but the fire went wild"), from "Ring of Fire," paid tribute to the late June Carter Cash the same month that you published your smokin' hot *Blender* 100 list.

JESSICA DESMONDS, MARIETTA, GEORGIA

COKE ADDICTS!

Excellent work on your cover feature about Beyoncé Knowles ["A Date With Destiny," August]. It was the best piece about her that I've ever read. What really made me smile was when she was at the *Saturday Night Live* studio and they couldn't find any Pepsi for her to drink. Surely it would please John Belushi's ghost to know that the cast of *SNL* still prefers "doing" Coke.

SAM MCCLELLAN, CLEVELAND

Why, whatever can you mean?

IMMORAL JUNK!

I didn't start reading *Blender* solely for the thought-provoking captions that run with the photos, but they're definitely what has kept me reading (well, besides the fact that I'm a big CD collector). I do have a question, though: Do you have a team of highly talented folks who write captions, or just one genius? *Blender* rocks. Keep up the goofy, raunchy, immoral junk. It's what we've come to love and expect.

CHRISTINE RAMSEY, SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

"Thought-provoking"? "Highly talented"? "Immoral junk"? Yep, that's us, all right.

Guess who just got the new Boz Scaggs box set!

SHAMELESS RIP-OFF!

I was wondering if you guys are familiar with this incarnation of Hookers N' Blow, your in-house band. Does your group feature members of Midwestern alt-country also-rans? I smell a battle of the bands!

JOE SAILER, PRIOR LAKE, MINNESOTA



PETE YORN: PORN KING

Pete Yorn ["Who Does Pete Yorn Think He Is?", June/July] mentioned that he and members of his band were really into pornography. Well, after arriving at a show in Birmingham, Alabama, one night, I walked by a parked tour bus and saw a sea of bodies on a TV screen. I noticed one woman happily bouncing on a man, with another woman next to her. It was ménage à trois action on the TV in what I assumed was Yorn's bus. Those guys should've closed the blinds and locked the doors.

THOMAS HAS, HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

Have you ever caught a pop star watching smutty movies? Please send replies to the usual address.

I AM NOT A PERVERT

When the Flaming Lips used the \$848 *Blender* gave them to pour Pepto-Bismol on strippers ["How About Strippers and Pepto-Bismol?", June/July], didn't the ladies get sick? Wouldn't the acid in Pepto irritate your



The Flaming Lips enjoy an average day in the *Blender* office.

body? If I had \$848 to spend, I wouldn't spend it on that — only saying I didn't like it, but the Flaming Lips should think before they act.

ALEX SMITH, APO, AE (STATIONED OVERSEAS)

Rest assured, the writer of the piece thoroughly checked out the girls afterward to make sure they were unharmed. At least that's what he told the police he was doing...

BIG GAY READER

Despite all the female hotties on your cover, you've just sold a subscription to a gay man. I recently picked up my first *Blender*, and after reading your comprehensive reviews section, I subscribed. I was impressed by your reviewers' comments and wide-ranging

Judson Baker (Knowles), Joe Yorno (The Flaming Lips)

★ Congratulations to the winner of *Blender*'s June/July Crossword contest, who walks away with a Gibson Les Paul Voodoo guitar: Zain Pirbhai from Gold River, California. Aw, yeah!

WIN ME!

LISTEN UP! >>

CALLING ALL *BLENDER* readers: We want to hear from you! Write us a letter. Tell us your deepest thoughts and secret desires. ... Er, well, maybe just your thoughts, then. If we print your letter in our next issue, we'll send you the amazing SlimX 400. iRiver's premier MP3-CD player features playlist management, built-in FM tuner, skip-free music playback, up to 23 hours of play time and MP3, WMA and ASF format support. Wow!

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Dita Von Teese's dog-training class was very popular.

tastes. (The Joni Mitchell recap [Back Catalog, June/July] was a particular highlight.) No wink-wink-nudge-nudge-aren't-we-so-cool? pop-culture tweaking — just hard-core fun. And I guess I have to admit that Jewel ["Girl Gone Wild"] isn't that bad to look at when you balance her out with a yummy photo of Pete Dinklage on the last page. I can't wait to get my hands on the next issue. Thank you.

LUCAS MIRE, ATLANTA

I ♥ DITA VON TEESE

Thanks so much for printing the picture of Dita Von Teese, who came in at number 91 on the *Blender* 100. Do I have to write any more, or is this enough to get you to publish another photo of her?

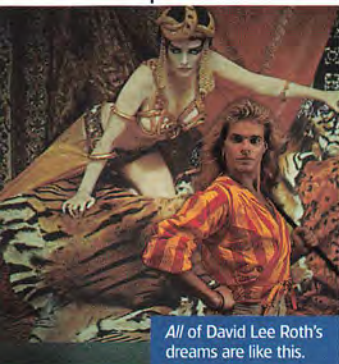
JEFF MOREINES, MADISON, WISCONSIN
No, that's plenty.

DIAMOND DAVE'S LOUSY MEMORY

I really enjoyed your recent David Lee Roth interview [Dear Superstar, August]. But am I the only person who read it who thinks that there might be a connection between the fact that he claims that he "smokes the shit that killed Elvis" and his utter inability to accurately remember the well-known lyric he claims to be most proud to have written?

DEBORAH KANCHER, PAYSON, ARIZONA

Are you saying there's a connection between smoking grass and . . . and . . . hey, who wants some chocolate?



All of David Lee Roth's dreams are like this.

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Lauryn Weinhart (left) and Zaria Zaboritz with Andrew Vink



David Prum and Britney Spears



Christopher Curry and Bruce Springsteen



Nicole Hughes and Gwen Stefani



Gardy Pays and Lenny Kravitz



Susie Cota and the Strokes' Julian Casablancas



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Moby socks!

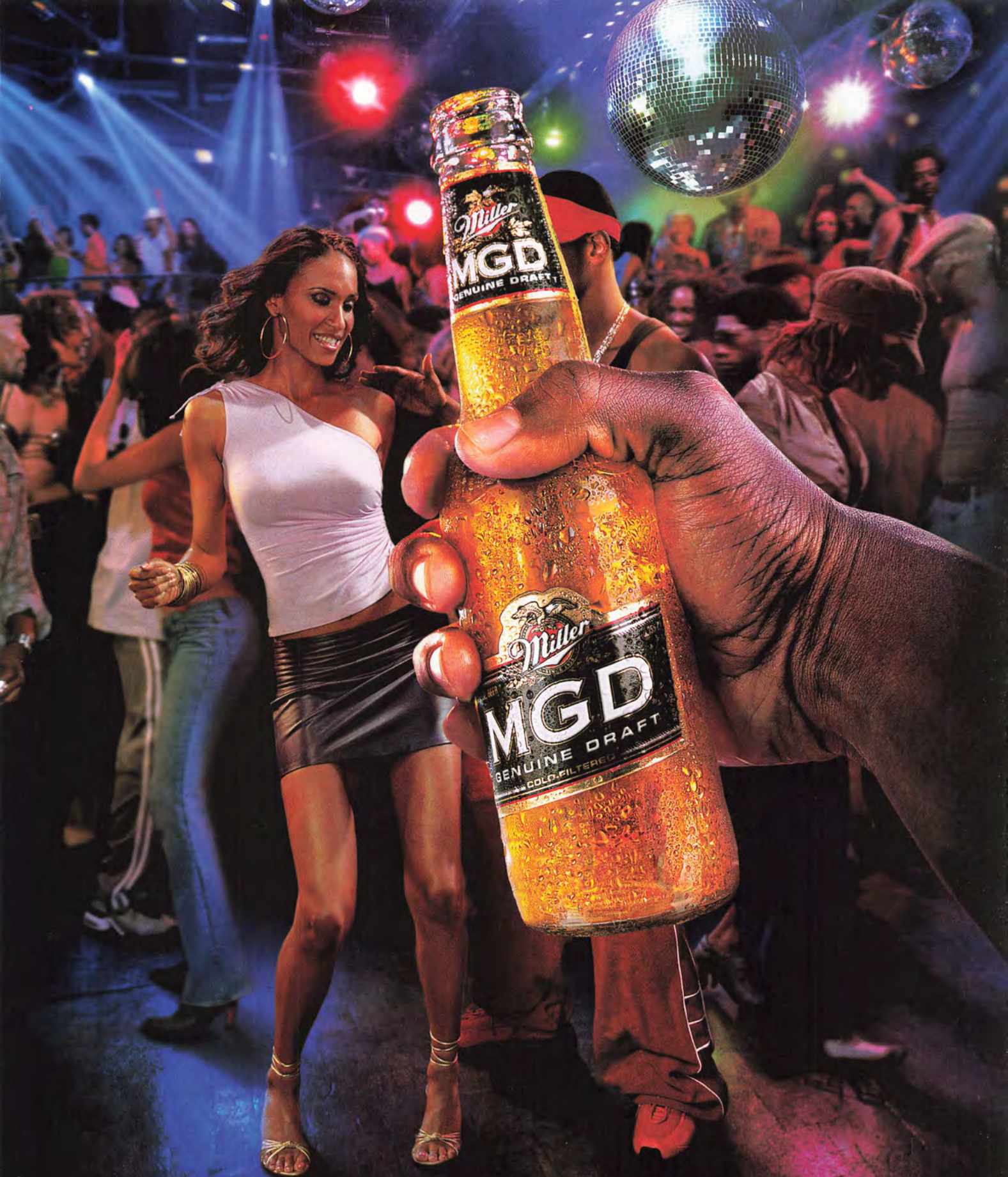
FIND MOBY!

Write and tell us which page this Moby picture is on (other than this one, obviously), and if yours is the first correct answer we pull out of a hat, you will win a sock like he has on, plus a Palm Zire 71 featuring a built-in digital camera! Yes!

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When All-American Rejects cut the cheese, they really cut the cheese.



A model leafs through *Blender* in Keith Murray's "Yeah, Yeah, Ya Know It" video.

SHAMELESS PLUG!

I recently noticed something that looked familiar in Keith Murray's "Yeah, Yeah, Ya Know It" video: One of the models featured in the clip is reading *Blender*! It just shows that you guys appeal to everyone.

ROY HOLLIS, ROMULUS, MICHIGAN

Actually, we appeal *only* to models.

LETTERS >>

A SUCKING VORTEX

I found it ironic that the All-American Rejects gave tips on how to survive a tornado [Useful Tips From the Stars, June/July], since they have so much in common with a sucking vortex. I live in Oklahoma, and I think the All-American Rejects are the worst natural disaster ever inflicted on our state. At least we were finally able to live down Hanson.

KATY PHILIPS, TULSA, OKLAHOMA

Actually, according to our records, you've still got another seven years to go on the Hanson thing.

VULGARITY AND DRUG USE

I just had to reply to the *Blender* reader's recent comment that every issue of the magazine is full of "raunch, soft porn, vulgarity and drug use" [Letters to the Editor, June/July], and that these are destroying our youth. I'm about to turn 15, and *Blender* isn't destroying me. It's telling the truth about what's going on in music. If kids copy what they see and hear, it's their parents' fault, not a magazine's.

JESSICA HERBERT, RAYNE, LOUISIANA

SICK OF COMPLAINING!

I'm sick of self-righteous individuals who always write to complain about *Blender's* content. I'm referring to the letter about soft porn, vulgarity and drug use that was published in your June/July issue. While I don't always agree with *Blender's* album reviews, and I'm often repulsed by the pictures you run of Courtney Love, your not-so-cuddly magazine never fails to make me laugh, and for that, I thank you.

ERIN SOOS, HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA

GOOD NAME FOR A BAND! >>

THE MIAMI RELATIVES

HILLARY LANNAN, BURBANK, CALIFORNIA



Do you have a good name for a band? Send it to *Blender*! We'll pick the best one we get, and — if it's yours — you'll win a slick iRiver iFP-390T flash player just like this one!

Please send your entry to Band Names, *Blender*, 1040 Avenue of the Americas, 22nd floor, New York, New York 10018.

Or e-mail to: bandnames@blender.com. Good luck!



Michael Laine (All-American Rejects)

Tired of being treated like a criminal for sharing music online?



You're in good company.

Over 60 million other music fans use peer-to-peer programs like Kazaa and Morpheus to share their favorite tunes. Yet the record labels are bullying ISPs and hunting down college kids in an effort to shut down file sharing.

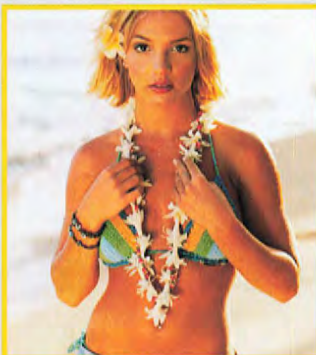
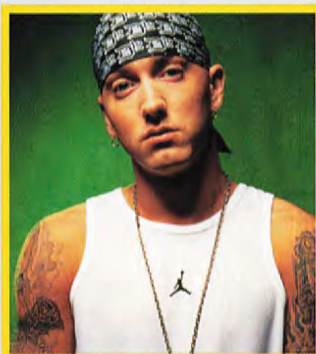
Isn't it time for a new approach? The Electronic Frontier Foundation thinks so. We believe the answer lies in a model that fairly compensates artists while supporting music lovers. Join EFF today so the music can play on.

File-Sharing:
It's Music to our Ears



Stand up for your right to share the music you love!
Join EFF today at www.eff.org/share/bl

VERY SPECIAL ISSUE!

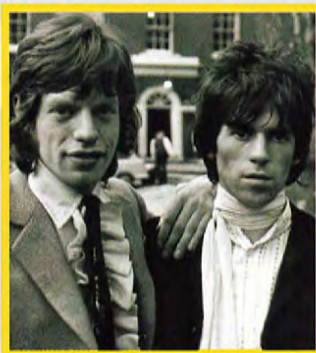
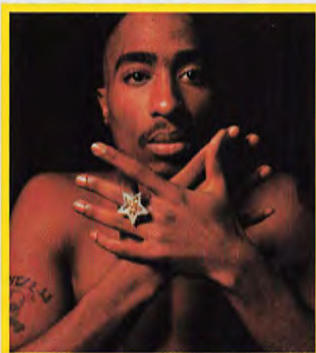
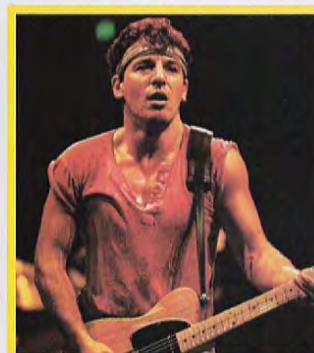


THE 1001 GREATEST SONGS

**TO DOWNLOAD
BEFORE YOU DIE!**



AS SELECTED BY A HOST OF STARS!

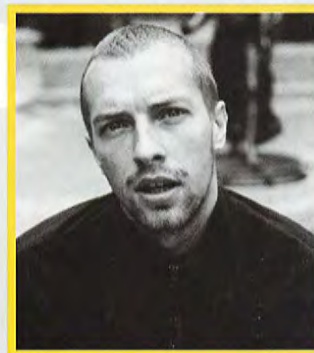


BLENDER

NEXT ISSUE

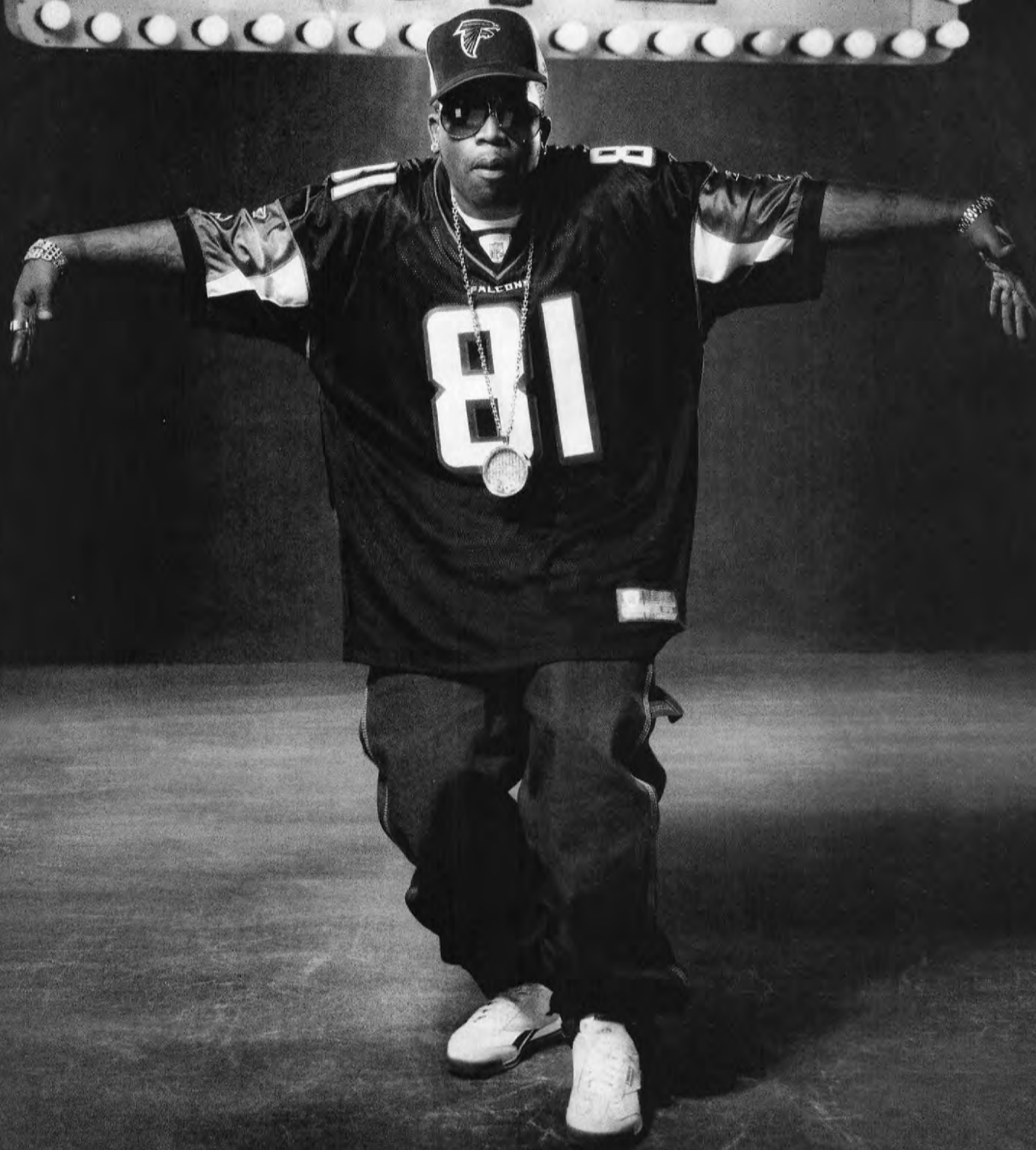
ON SALE SEPT. 23

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Top row, from left: Kevin Krieger/Corbis Outlines; CKQ/LE; Phil Kneel/Reina Ltd.; Kelly Pearson/Camera Press/Reina Ltd.; Second row, from left: George Habi/Corbis Outlines; Dennis Morris/Camera Press/Reina Ltd.; Third row, from left: Ian Tilton/S.N.I./Corbis; Neil Preston/Corbis; Fourth row, from left: Dainny Clinch/Corbis Outlines; Charles Hoxton/Reina Ltd.; Erika Aspinwall/Visages; Henry Ditz/Corbis; Fifth row, from left: Hulton/Archive; Lynda Churilla/Corbis Outlines

WELCOME TO ATL



(404) Classic.



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CLASSIC

Big Boy is wearing the Reebok Classic Supercourt (available in a variety of colors and materials), the New Authentic NFL Equipment Atlanta Falcons Jersey and Fitted Pinwheel Hat by Reebok.

BURNER

ALL THE MUSIC. ALL THE NEWS. ALL THE TIME

★ XTINA AND PAM MAKE OUT! ★ IRAQI BOY BAND? ★ AVRIL SHOWS ASS! >>

Snoop Dogg
arrives at the BET
Awards, June 24

Is Someone Trying To Kill Snoop Dogg?

→ Could that be why the rapper turned up at the BET Awards with armored cars, armed bodyguards and a deadly arsenal?



SNOOP DOGG IS in fear for his life, and his risk of being shot has made the rapper step up his security to levels that are against the law, sources close to him say.

At the recent BET Awards show in Los Angeles, Dogg (born Calvin Broadus) arrived in a three-vehicle caravan. Accompanying him was an entourage that included state parole agents and Inglewood, California, Unified School District police officers moonlighting as bodyguards. Several wore body armor.

After the convoy dropped off the 30-year-old rapper at the red carpet, police officers pulled over the vehicles, one of which was a customized armored van with gun ports.

"This was not just a vehicle for protection," said Los Angeles Police spokesman Lt. Art Miller. "Those inside had an ability to shoot out. . . . [It] was an Econoline van on steroids."

Police confiscated an arsenal of weapons including batons, knives, pepper spray, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and seven handguns, one equipped with a laser-sighting device. Three men who identified themselves as Dogg's bodyguards were arrested on various charges.

Although Dogg, who that night received the Best Collaboration award, was not detained, he could face charges. In 1990, he was convicted of possession of cocaine with intent to sell. Authorities have confirmed that it is illegal for a felon to possess weapons or hire armed security guards. Those charges carry a penalty of up to 10 years in prison.

The incident at the BET Awards came 11 weeks after an unknown assailant opened fire on Dogg and his five-car entourage while he was driving in Los Angeles. A car carrying three men parked alongside the cars and sprayed two of them with gunshots. A bullet grazed the back of one of Dogg's bodyguards. Police made no arrests, and the drive-by remains unsolved.

Blender has discovered that sources in the hip-hop community believe the shooting was related to



Weapons seized from Dogg's security detail at BET Awards



LAPD officers pull over Dogg's three-car convoy



Dogg's armored van with gun ports

Dogg's involvement in the 1993 death of a

rival gang member in Los Angeles. Shots fired from a car Dogg was driving killed Philip Woldemariam, 20. Both Dogg and his bodyguard McKinley Lee, who had fired the deadly bullet into

Woldemariam's back, were apprehended. Both claimed self-defense and were cleared of the charges.

Meanwhile, resentment of Dogg still runs high among

the Bloods gang, said a source who wished to remain anonymous.

A long-running feud between Dogg and his former label boss Marion "Suge" Knight (who was once a Blood) recently flared up when Dogg dissed Knight on his mix tape *Welcome 2 tha Chuuch*. The track "Hater in You" takes potshots at Knight and continues where "Pimp Slapp'd" (from Dogg's last album, *Paid tha Cost to Be da Bo\$\$*) left off. On that song, he rapped, "Suge Knight's a bitch and that's on my life."

Earlier this year, Dogg appeared on a remix of 50 Cent's "P.I.M.P.," on which he boasted, "I'm a motherfuckin' C-r-i-p."

At press time, the Web site of Knight's label, now called Tha Row, featured a graphic making fun of Dogg for bringing along the small army to the BET Awards.

Dogg acrimoniously split from Knight's Death Row Records in 1998. At the time, he said he feared for his life.

He was unavailable for comment for this article. *JON CARAMANICA*



Los Angeles, April 10: Gunfire shattered the windows of a car in Snoop Dogg's entourage.

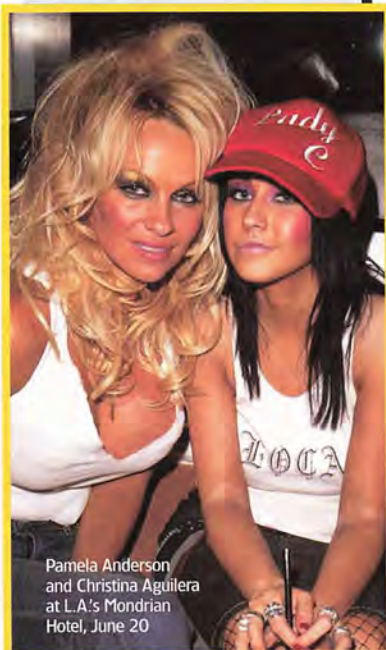
A woman with voluminous, dark, curly hair is shown in profile, smiling and looking towards the right. She is wearing a black crop top with a red graphic of a motorcycle and a necklace with a large, rectangular, metallic pendant. She is holding a Budweiser beer bottle in her right hand. The background is a warm, out-of-focus red and orange, suggesting a party or bar setting. The text "Flirt is not a four-letter word." is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Flirt is not a four-letter word.



Budweiser





Pamela Anderson and Christina Aguilera at L.A.'s Mondrian Hotel, June 20

GIRL ON GIRL!

Pamela Anderson and Christina Aguilera smooch in public. Yes!

>> PAMELA ANDERSON and Christina Aguilera are rumored to have been seen kissing passionately at a party held at the Mondrian Hotel in Los Angeles.

Onlookers said the busty actress and the pop starlet were "making out, giggling and looking very cozy" following a Staples Center show by Aguilera and Justin Timberlake.

"The word that best describes me now is *free*," Anderson recently said. In addition to her public make-out session, the former *Baywatch* blonde has been seen out with former fiancé Kid Rock, limpbizkit frontman Fred Durst and former husband Tommy Lee.

Aguilera also has other interests. She is currently involved with Jordan Bratman, a partner in the company that manages her. **NOEL BODDIE**

Tell Us a Joke!

WYCLEF JEAN

"Why did the squirrel cross the road? Because he was stapled to the chicken!"

AS TOLD TO MONA LOTT

News Roundup!

BOY GEORGE's recent birthday party was interrupted when **KYLIE MINOGUE** arrived to serenade him with "Happy Birthday." The former Culture Club frontman was reportedly moved to tears by her performance.

DMX has demanded a formal apology from St. Kitts Music Festival organizers after police on the Caribbean island arrested him for swearing onstage. The rapper claims a pre-show agreement permitted him to use profanity in lyrics but not during ad-libs. He is also threatening legal action.

While watching *The Matrix Reloaded* in a Georgia theater with Ben Affleck, **JENNIFER LOPEZ** sobbed in agony after a piece of popcorn cracked a tooth. "It was like a knife in my brain," she said.



Troubled Libertines singer Pete Doherty (circled) with co-singer Carl Barat

Addicted to Heroin?

The U.K.'s answer to the Strokes are imploding...

>> **HOT NEW ROCK** band the Libertines are on the brink of collapse — and *Blender* has discovered that rampant drug use could be to blame.

Since mid-June, the band has performed across Europe without singer-songwriter-guitarist Pete Doherty. According to a management statement, "Peter is unwell and the band are very concerned for his well-being." A stand-in has been performing in his place.

Doherty's absence appears to be related to drug addiction. *Blender* has seen a photograph showing a sad-faced Doherty holding a syringe. Fans close to the band claim to have witnessed him using crack cocaine.

Doherty's drug use has led to erratic behavior. Sources say that in order to complete an immigration form, a member of the band's

management had to visit Doherty's house and hold a pen in his hand.

On a recent trip to the United States, he caused extensive damage to the New York offices of their record label, Rough Trade, while loudly declaring that the staff owed their livelihoods to him.

Doherty has admitted to prima donna behavior. "I can't just swan up and plug in and scream it all out any more," he wrote on a fan forum. "I don't want to have all of 'em relying on my whims."

Co-leader Carl Barat's mother, Chrissie, also appeared on an online fan forum, writing, "I'm sure you'll all be pleased to know that Peter is in rehab."

A Libertines spokesperson would neither confirm nor deny that the singer, 23, is undergoing treatment for heroin addiction but said, "He's a highly strung, intelligent guy, and he's just been overdoing it lately." **STEVE LOWE**

WORD!



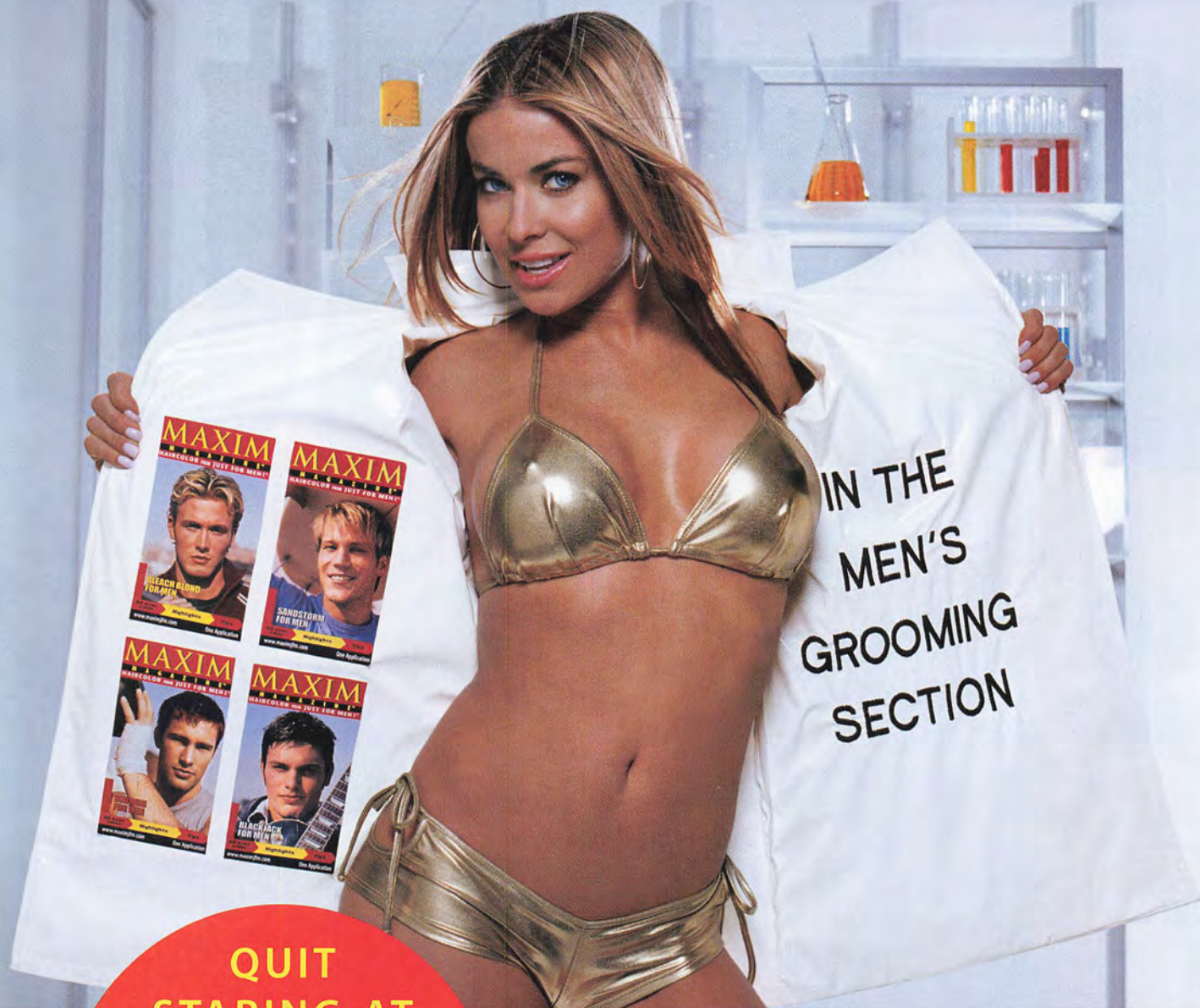
"Don't pull my wig off."

DOLLY PARTON TO A NEARBY HORSE AT THE OPENING OF HER DIXIE STAMPEDE THEATER



"The band is very concerned for Peter's well-being."





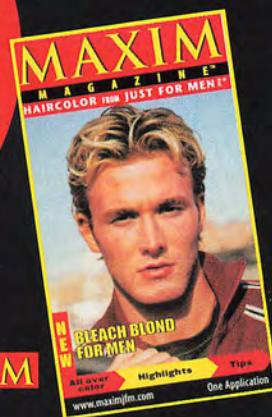
**QUIT
STARING AT
THE MAXIM
BOXES
AND PAY
ATTENTION TO
CARMEN.**

Here's
a flash from Carmen Electra:
"Girls love guys with great hair
like guys love girls in thongs. And
now, it's really **EASY** for guys to get
the look that girls love.
Try Maxim Haircolor. You can get
highlights. Tips. All over color.
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The Next Big Thing!

ON CHAUNTELLE: T-SHIRT BY
ANGST & RIDICULE @ DERNIERCRI;
JEANS BY FRACTAL ON
JONATHAN: SHIRT BY DIESEL
JEANS BY LEVI'S ON STACY: SHIRT
BY SERINA CANGICUA; JEANS BY
LEVI'S ON SHERRIE: JEANS BY
PAINTED BY SHERRIE; JEANS BY
LEVI'S; SHOES BY CONVERSE ON
WESTON: VINTAGE T-SHIRT FROM
FILTHMART; JEANS BY LEVI'S;
SHOES BY PUMA

➤ Soaring, hook-driven rock with a swelling emotional bottom.

Eisley, clockwise
from left:
Weston DuPree,
Chauntelle DuPree,
Jonathan Wilson,
Stacy DuPree,
Sherri DuPree

EISLEY

➔ Putting a suicide attempt and a broken toilet behind them, four siblings and their neighbor rock out Gwyneth Paltrow!

BY JONAH WEINER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

➤➤ "ONE DAY WE'RE watching Gwyneth Paltrow in a movie, and the next day she's watching our band!" marvels Eisley guitarist Chauntelle DuPree, 21. "It's kinda funny."

Less than a year ago, the rock fivesome — DuPree, her three teenage siblings and their 20-year-old neighbor, Jonathan Wilson — were performing at a tiny coffee shop in Tyler, Texas. Now, with only a six-song EP, *Laughing City*, they're on tour with Chris Martin (Mr. Gwyneth) and Coldplay, gigging at the Hollywood Bowl and Madison Square Garden.

Trauma got the band together six years ago. "A friend of ours got strung out on drugs," singer Sherri DuPree, 19, recalls. "He jumped off a building, broke his neck and lived," Chauntelle adds. Shocked, keyboardist Stacy DuPree, then just 8, wrote their first song, and Eisley was born.

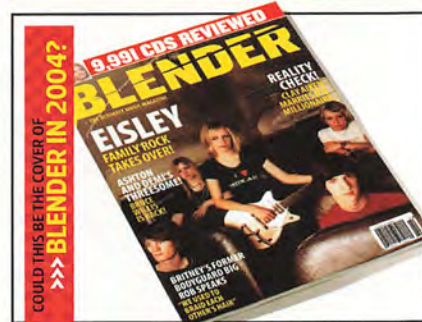
Growing up in a cramped house, the DuPree kids (six in all) shared two bedrooms and a single toilet. "It was falling through the floor," Chauntelle groans. Today, they pack into a van with their father, Boyd, who keeps a journal and posts it on the group's Web site.

"We're each other's best friends," adds drummer Weston DuPree, 16. "We have other friends, but —" Chauntelle chimes in: "It's more fun to do things together!"

Cute and precocious in a *Dawson's Creek*-meets-*Children of the Corn* way, Eisley make soaring, hook-driven rock with a swelling emotional bottom. Their music is big enough to command stadiums, but they're intent on keeping their egos small. The most extravagant thing on their rider? "Hummus," Weston confesses. No flunkies removing the brown M&M's backstage?

Chauntelle blushes and buries herself in an overstuffed couch. "If we ever get like that, then it's time to quit." (BLENDER)

➤➤ OUT NOW
LAUGHING CITY RECORD COLLECTION





BELLEVUE BOSTON NEW YORK SAN FRANCISCO SANTA MONICA SOUTH COAST PLAZA LONDON PARIS MELBOURNE TOKYO

JOSIE THOUGHT SAM WAS BEING ROMANTIC.
SHE DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS ALSO
SEEING THE GIRL ACROSS THE HALL.


PUMA
puma.com



"Now where did I put those sunglasses?"

Do You Rock? ★

Dave Gahan

Does the ex-heroin addict and Depeche Mode frontman rock?

Best rumor about yourself?

That I died. Well, I *did*, when I was 34. My heart stopped for a couple of minutes.

Biggest celebrity in your cellphone?

Anthony Kiedis.

Teenage delinquent?

When I was 13, I hung out with kids who joyrode cars. Once, I sprayed my own name in graffiti on a wall. I also got caught taking lead off the school roof and selling it to a scrapyard. I spent a few months in a juvenile hall.

What straightened you out?

The Clash and the Sex Pistols frightened my mum more than the car thing, so I went for music instead.

Last person you wanted to kill?

Fletch, my Depeche Mode keyboard player. Onstage last tour, I pulled his rig down. He hurled abuse and left for three songs. He got in my territory. No one fucks with my space onstage.

Even your mother?

Ah, I'd let me mum. She still gets on my case. She's like, "Why do you grab your crotch so much?"

Mile-high club?

A couple of times. On my plane, but that's cheating. I've also had sex on the bullet train in Japan.



The Clash's Joe Strummer

Ride a motorcycle?

Sure. I still ride a Harley. When we were young, we used to make bikes.

Injected drugs into your eyeball?

No, but I've injected between my toes. It's disgusting. JONAH WEINER

VERDICT!

WAS THERE EVER ANY DOUBT? DAVE GAHAN ... ROCKS!

→ DAVE GAHAN'S NEW SOLO ALBUM, *PAPER MONSTERS* (WARNER BROS.), IS OUT NOW.

News Roundup!

Police near Detroit recently discovered two bags of suspicious white powder (up to 25 grams) in the car of Eminem's troubled ex-wife, **KIMBERLY MATHERS**. She has pleaded not guilty to drug possession. In July 2001, Mathers was arrested for cocaine possession; the charges were ultimately dropped.

LUTHER VANDROSS, the '80s soul star who suffered a stroke in April, is recovering well and is now able to speak. "I feel as though I am watching a modern-day miracle," his business manager said.

THE FLAMING LIPS have reached an out-of-court settlement with **CAT STEVENS** — now known as Yusuf Islam — over the similarities between the Lips' recent single "Fight Test" and the singer-songwriter's 1970 classic "Father and Son." Royalties will be divided between the parties.

WORD!



"They're all over him, and it's just sickening to me."

CHRISTINA "I'M NOT JEALOUS" AGUILERA, ON JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE'S FEMALE FANS



"My mom's gonna kill me."

Stripped!

ODB's in trouble again — with Mom!



"Dirty's for the kids!"



"I'm hungry."

→ OL' DIRTY

Bastard, now calling himself Dirt McGirt, upset his mother when he invited two lady friends along to a Mother's Day dinner at a Manhattan restaurant.

The 34-year-old ODB has been living on his mother's couch in Brooklyn since his release from a mental hospital in May.

The father of 13 has been "active with the ladies"; more specifically, Dirty's been with "a new girl every night," according to VH1 producers who are documenting his life for the reality show *ODB on Parole*.

Roc-A-Fella Records CEO Damon Dash has hired a chaperone to ensure ODB's return to his mother's house by his court-imposed 9 P.M. curfew. CHUCK MINDENHALL

Weird Band Alert!

TWINK

An angry goth from Boston. Wicked!



WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

"People have contacted me to say how utterly irritating they find my music," says Mike

Langlie, a disillusioned goth-turned-toy-instrument collector. "They've called it worse than musical greeting cards or the Teletubbies."

IS IT REALLY AS AWFUL AS IT SOUNDS?

Well, for instruments, Langlie uses nearly 30 small toy pianos, drums and whistles that he found in junk shops and on eBay. *Welcome to the Jingle*, Twink's first "retro-futurist electronica" record, was inspired by Langlie's toy piano-and-electric cello rendition of Metallica's "Enter Sandman."



"More! More! More tiny pianos, I say!"

ISN'T THAT A RATHER EXCESSIVE NUMBER OF TINY PIANOS?

No! "Each has a different key size, tone and tuning," Langlie explains. "My Kleinway, for example, sounds like someone hitting a coffee can over your head with a spoon! It has its uses, but you're gonna get sick of hearing it pretty quickly." STEVE LOWE

Stuff IS GIVING AWAY
\$150,000
IN CASH AND PRIZES!

M A G A Z I N E



\$150,000
TREASURE
HUNT

*See the October
issue of Stuff
for details!*

**PICK UP STUFF'S OCTOBER ISSUE
ON NEWSSTANDS SEPTEMBER 16!**
MORE DETAILS AT STUFFMAGAZINE.COM



It's love/great publicity at first sight!

ASHTON KUTCHER REVIVING DEMI MOORE IS THE NEW ASHTON KUTCHER REVIVING TRUCKER HATS

AND OTHER LATE-BREAKING DEVELOPMENTS

 Britney admits to shagging	is the new	Britney admits to drugging
 Renee and Jack	is the new	Gwyneth and Chris
Is Pam back with Kid Rock?	is the new	Is Pam back with Tommy Lee?
Rock stars on Friendster	is the new	Rock stars on heroin
Spike Lee, totally deluded celebrity	is the new	Spike Lee, iconoclast filmmaker
 Figuring out if Saddam is dead or alive based on recordings	is the new	 Figuring out if 2Pac is dead or alive based on recordings
The latest Kennedy scandal	is the new	Kennedy scandal
Drug-addled blogaholic Ryan Adams	is the new	Drug-addled blogaholic Courtney Love
Arnold's failing franchise film	is the new	Arnold's failing franchise food
Bush denouncing slavery	is the new	Bush trying to pronounce slavery
Madonna, celebrity tourist to Israel	is the new	Whitney, celebrity tourist to Israel



News Roundup!

New hot couple **JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE** and **Cameron Diaz** reportedly share a germ phobia. Timberlake takes up to four showers a day, while Diaz has been known to open doors with her elbows.

BEYONCÉ KNOWLES recently walked out on a photo shoot for *The Face* magazine when the photographer, David LaChapelle, demanded that she strip and be covered in honey.

JAY-Z cohort **BEANIE SIGEL** — real name Dwight Grant — has surrendered to police after being accused of shooting a man in the stomach and foot outside the Ponytail Bar in Philadelphia.

Former Sony Music honcho **TOMMY MOTTOLA** signed a \$50 million joint-venture deal with Universal Music that will resurrect the legendary '70s indie label Casablanca. Earlier this year, Mottola stepped down as head of Sony and was replaced by a television executive from NBC.

WORD!



"If I were the viewer, I'd be sick of me by now."

SIMON COWELL, ON TOO MUCH AMERICAN IDOL



Unknown to No One, from left: Diyar Diler, Hassan Ali al-Falluji, Nadeem Hamed, Art Haroutunian, Shant Garabedian

Desert Storm!

The allies exorcised Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, liberated his people — and installed a boy band!



➤ A BOY BAND from Baghdad is planning to start where 'N Sync left off and invade Western pop charts.

Under Iraq's former regime, the singing/dancing five-piece Unknown to No One was forced to record Ba'ath Party tributes and insert Saddam Hussein's name into otherwise unrelated songs. Now, with the help of British music-industry figures, the group wants to record American-style pop songs and become poster boys for their country's reconstruction.

Art Haroutunian, 25, and Shant Garabedian, 24, founded Unknown to No One in 1999. Hassan Ali al-Falluji and Diyar Diler, both 21, and Nadeem Hamed, 20, were recruited through an advertisement on Uday

Hussein's Voice of Youth FM radio station. Last year, London-based A&R expert Peter Whitehead received a demo featuring the self-composed track "Hey Girl" and saw potential. "I thought it was going to be dire," he said. "Much to my amazement, it actually wasn't bad."

The outbreak of war delayed a meeting with Whitehead, but he has since enlisted songwriter Barry Mason (who penned Tom Jones's 1968 hit "Delilah") and is organizing a show at London's Houses of Parliament.

There are, however, problems that need ironing out. "Iraqi dental treatment has been very basic, so work might be needed there," Whitehead admitted. *STEVE LOWE*

"Much to my amazement, they're actually not bad."



Pop Star Must-Have ARM BANDS

In the pop-star style stakes, "cutting-edge" means wristbands worn near the elbow. Whoa.



Simple Plan's Pierre Bouvier



Avril Lavigne



Justin Timberlake



Backstreet Boys' Kevin Richardson

NYP/2uma Press/Newscom (Kutcher and Moore); Andrea Comas/Reuters (Unknown to No One); Chris Heigen/Reuters Photo Archive/Newscom (soldier); James Harvey/WireImage.com (Laguerre); Jen Conner/LA (Bouvier); Lavigne; Simon News (Hamed); Hassan Ali al-Falluji; Diyar Diler; Nadeem Hamed; Art Haroutunian; Shant Garabedian; Justin Timberlake; Backstreet Boys; Kevin Richardson; Jeff Vespa/WireImage.com (Pac); Getty Images/Newscom (Hussein); Jiri Ruymer/Photo Newscom (Diler); Jiri Ruymer/Photo Newscom (Spears); Gary French (illustration)



EX model shown with accessory roof rack. © 2003 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. honda.com 1-800-33-Honda



270 watts. 6 speakers. Subwoofer. MP3 jack. The new Honda Element. Go with it.



The Next Big Thing!

OBIE TRICE

→ This former crack dealer escapes death to become Eminem's newest prodigy! Yay!

BY NICK DUERDEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PEROU

>>> IT'S LUNCHTIME IN the heart of London, and Obie Trice, 24, has just ordered a \$30 sandwich. "Man," says the Detroit native, sitting in a five-star hotel restaurant. The pianist is tinkling something fancy. "This is some refined shit. But I'm getting used to it. Big tours, nice hotels, money. It's my world now."

Trice, Eminem's latest prodigy, is on a U.K. tour with the rap megastar. "I'm only guesting on a couple of songs," he says, "but come September, when the album drops, everyone will know my name."

Produced by Dr. Dre and Timbaland, *Cheers* establishes Trice as a street-smart, savvy rapper, coupling Eminem's way with words and 50 Cent's prowling menace. "I owe it all to Marshall [Eminem]," he says. "That man saved my life."

Unable to hold down a job because "it's in [his] nature to fuck with authority," Trice was selling crack by age 20. It nearly got him killed.

"This one guy, high on crack, held a gun to my head, screaming that he was going to shoot me. As soon as he turned his back, I jumped out of the window, glass everywhere, fell into the backyard and ran up the street, just waiting for the bullet to crack my skull!"

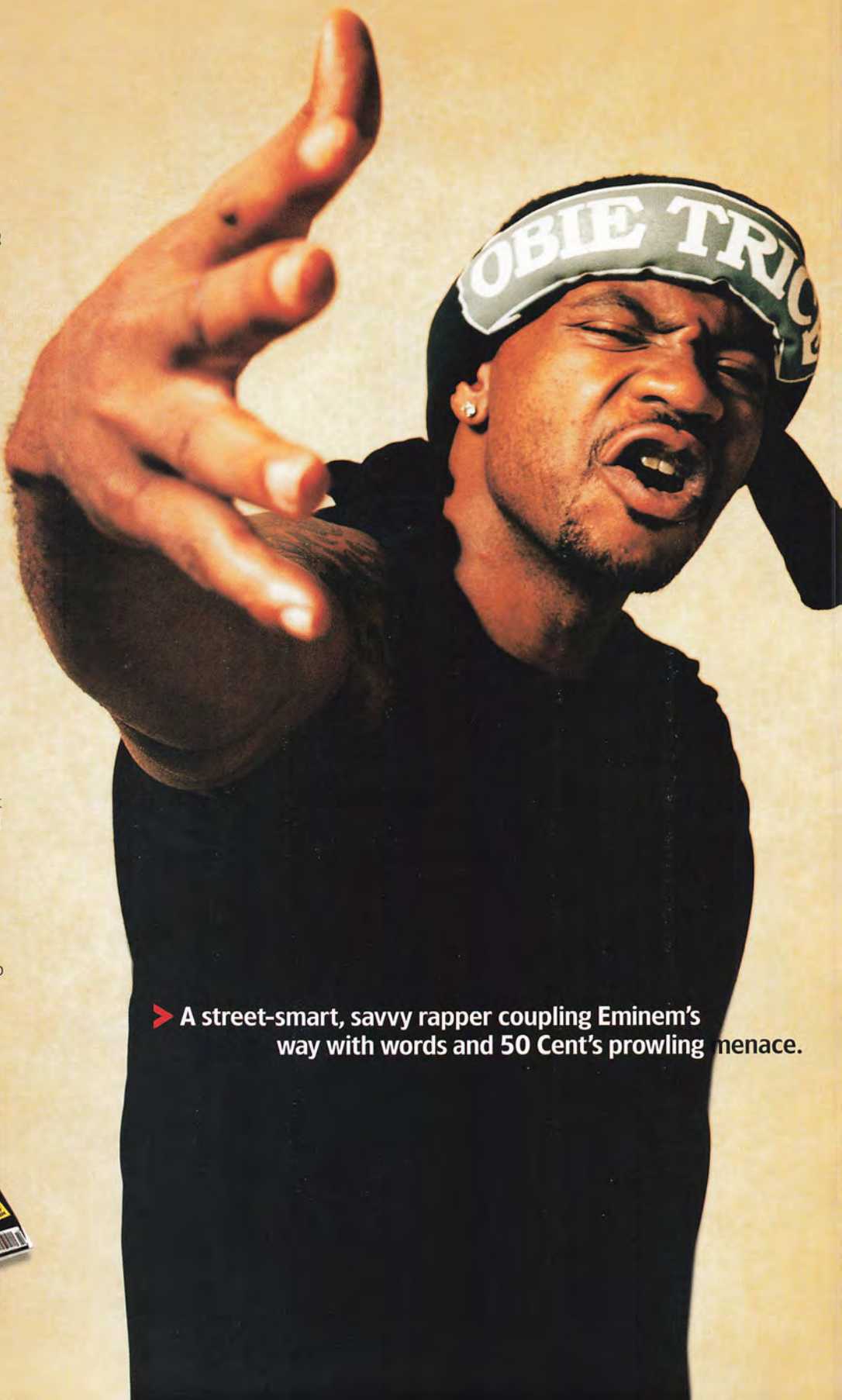
Doing time and becoming a father convinced Trice to go straight. "I didn't get raped [in jail]," he says. "I could handle it. I played cards with a bunch of cool guys." Eminem soon spotted his talent and now tells everybody that *Cheers* is the rap debut of 2003.

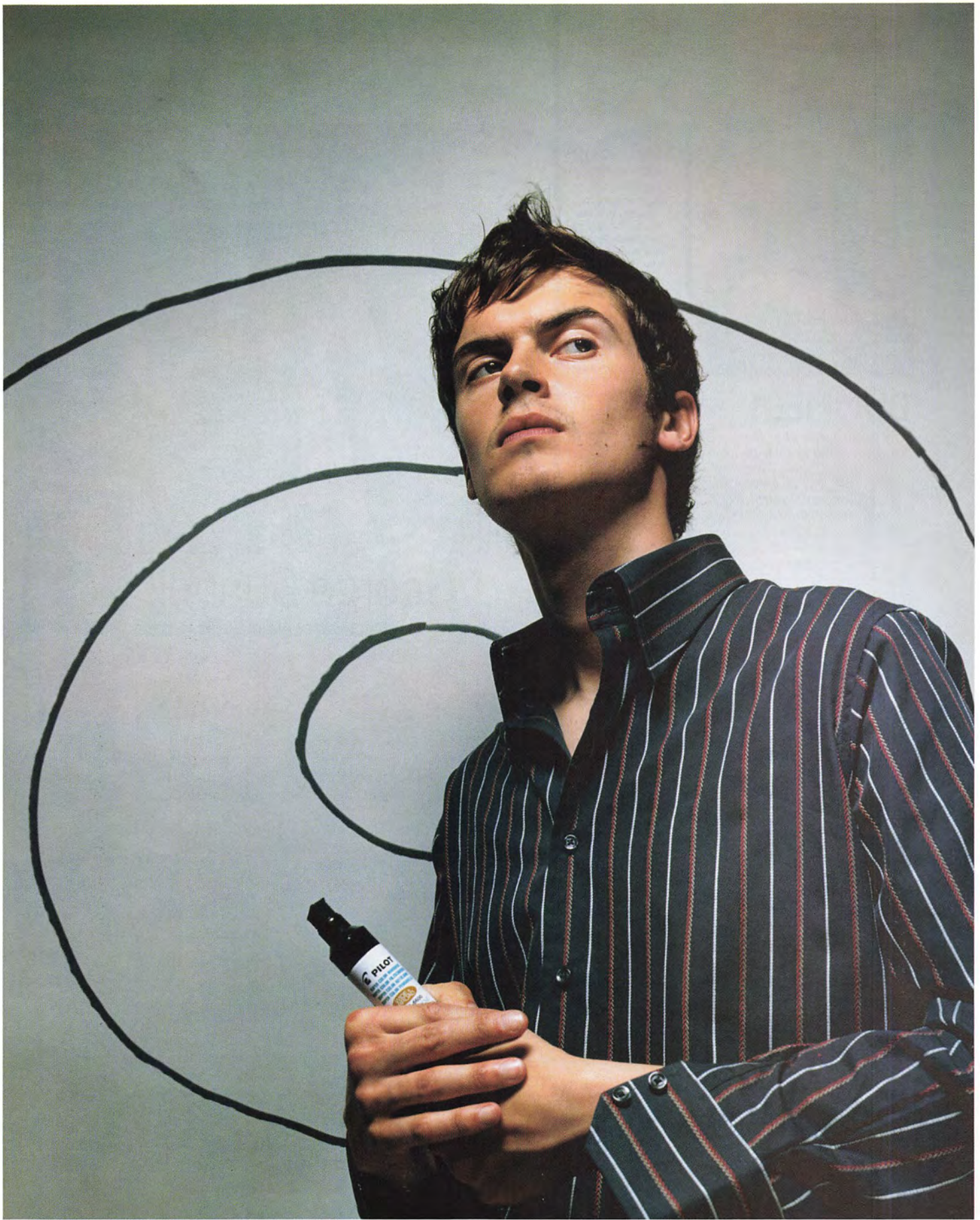
"I've come a long way," Trice says, evidence of his club sandwich smeared across both cheeks. "And man, it's good to be alive." [BLENDER]

>>> OUT NOW
CHEERS SHADY



> A street-smart, savvy rapper coupling Eminem's way with words and 50 Cent's prowling menace.





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Avril. Butt seriously.

BUMMED!

Avril Lavigne shows Canada her ass, gives Australia the finger!



ON JUNE 22, Avril Lavigne celebrated Toronto's annual MuchMusic Awards the same way she did last year — by flashing her butt.

As shown in the August issue of *Blender*, Lavigne's derrière made an unplanned appearance last year thanks to a heavy battery pack on her pants. This time, she willfully flashed her ass to reveal the letters MMVA scrawled across her cheeks.

Meanwhile, in Australia, an anti-Avril campaign picketed her Brisbane show. The singer, in turn, gave the crowd the finger and told them to "fuck off."

"I think she's retarded," said a DJ at Melbourne's Fox FM. "That's the only explanation." *JF PARNELL*



News Roundup!

ADAM ANT has been arrested for allegedly throwing rocks through a neighbor's window. The troubled '80s star shouted unintelligibly, ran into a London cafe, dropped his trousers and finally retired to the basement for "a rest."

Chris Martin's bandmates in **COLDPLAY** were unhappy that his girlfriend, Gwyneth Paltrow, would accompany them on their summer tour. The actress requested a dressing room where she and Martin could be alone.

National Football League executives have reportedly warned pop princess **BRITNEY SPEARS** that her headlining status at September's season kickoff could be at risk unless she curbs her reported newfound affection for alcohol.

DR. DRE has dissed **JA RULE** on a new track by **OBIE TRICE**. "Quit trying to be tough, nigga, you look like an asshole," the easygoing production legend raps on "Shit Hits the Fan."

WORD!



"When I see my name spelled as one word, I want to slap and choke people."

MEAT LOAF



Chin up, mate!

DEPRESSED!

What's eating Robbie Williams?

>> **ROBBIE WILLIAMS** says he thinks he's hooked on antidepressants.

"I think I'm happy because of the pills," Williams said recently. The British pop star, who has yet to break in America, began taking the antidepressant Effexor in the spring of 2002 to treat depression.

The former cocaine addict has also been battling side effects. "[The pills] screw up my metabolism," he noted. "The weight just won't come off." *LAUREN HARRIS*

☆ Where Are They Now? ☆

Life After Rock



George Bunnell

of Strawberry Alarm Clock



THEN!

Bass and vocals
1967-1968

NOW!

Mercedes salesman,
Calabasas, California

>> "BEING IN Strawberry Alarm Clock was beyond belief! We were 18-year-old kids when 'Incense and Peppermints,' on our debut album, hit number 1. It was 1967, and we were icons of the Summer of Love. It was a very mind-expanding time.

"Our music wasn't pot-induced, but it sounds as if it was. We smoked, but only after we had the music where we wanted it. It was cool to listen to it while stoned.

"We once toured with the Beach Boys, and they showed us the ropes. At one hotel, prostitutes approached us, but we didn't know what they were, so the Beach Boys shushed them away for us.

"By our third record [1968], we wanted to fire our manager because he brought in outside writers. 'Please don't fire me,' he said. 'I'm dying of cancer. I've got only six months to live.' [Organist] Mark Weitz, [guitarist] Ed King and [guitarist] Lee Freeman gave in, and [drummer] Randy Seol and I

quit. The manager's still alive.

"In 1986, after I finished an eight-month tour, I saw a newspaper ad for auto sales: 'Earn \$5,000 a month; no experience needed.' So I went and filled out an application.

Under work experience, I put 'Strawberry Alarm Clock, 1967-present.' The sales manager hired me on the spot.

"The first person I talked to bought a car from me. I've been salesman of the year nine times since then. I've been selling

Mercedes in Calabasas, California, for the past three years.

"Selling a car is harder than writing a good song.

With cars, you struggle, struggle, struggle and get paid once. The songs have a way of paying you later." *AS TOLD TO JON REGARDIE*



Wussiest bike gang ever

"The Beach Boys shushed prostitutes away for us."



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1



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CHAMPS
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What's in Your Bag? ☆



Deep Dish, from left: Ali, Sharam

DEEP DISH

At the Virgin Megastore, Union Square, New York



SIDEKICK "RESPOND"

Sharam: "They're amazing new talent and fresh blood from the U.K. If you're losing the crowd, drop this prime-time dance-floor anthem on. The massive breakdown really gets into your head!"



THE WHITE STRIPES ELEPHANT

Ali: "The best album I've heard in a long time. When we heard 'Seven Nation Army,' something clicked, and we threw it in the middle of our dance set, which was refreshing."



MOREL "FUNNY CAR"

Sharam: "He's the only guy who has a rock band and also makes great dance music. He's a force to be reckoned with, and he's phenomenal with lyrics, too. He puts lyrics back into dance music."



GANG STARR "THE OWNERZ"

Ali: "The way DJ Premier put music together and scratched was a huge influence. I used to be a hip-hop DJ, so I worshiped him. DJ Premier was definitely a mentor."

SARAH WILSON

→ DEEP DISH'S NEW ALBUM, *GLOBAL UNDERGROUND #25: "TORONTO"* (GLOBAL UNDERGROUND), IS OUT NOW.

News Roundup!

Destiny's Child's manager, Mathew Knowles, has said he is considering adding his daughter **SOLANGE (BEYONCÉ KNOWLES's sister)** to the group's lineup when it reconvenes in 2004. The reaction of Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams to the news remains unknown.

EMINEM recently dangled a doll from a hotel window in Scotland. Mocking renowned baby-dangler **MICHAEL JACKSON**, the rapper tossed and caught the doll in front of waiting fans. He was wearing a surgical mask at the time.

Fourteen **RUSSIAN MUSIC FANS** were killed when suicide bombers hit the Krylya (Wings) Rock Festival in Moscow on July 5. The female bombers were Chechen separatist rebels; the attack marked the first suicide mission to hit the Russian capital.

WORD!



"I feel like Elton John in this mutha-fucka."

ODB, TO THE AUDIENCE OF HIS FIRST SHOW SINCE BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON



Pink (inset) and Chris Martin of Coldplay, one of the most downloaded acts on iTunes

Stay Free!

How to avoid being sued for downloading Coldplay, Pink and others this fall



→ **BLENDER HAS** discovered how to avoid being on the receiving end of a hefty lawsuit when the Recording Industry Association of America goes on the offensive this fall in its attempts to stop illegal music downloading.

The RIAA claims that — at least at first — it will chase down only those who make their own "substantial" song libraries available through peer-to-peer services. If your program is set only to download (as opposed to upload), you'll be spared the ax for the moment.

For now, some search engines have found ways to avoid being shut down like Napster. Kazaa, for example, is not based in the United States. The company is officially incorporated on the Pacific island

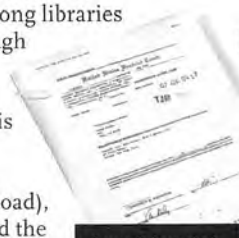
nation of Vanuatu and is therefore exempt from litigation.

Downloaders' risk of prosecution increased in early June when Verizon and Earthlink were forced to give the RIAA the names of subscribers who had traded files online.

Five users received nothing more than a cease-and-desist letter, but much worse is coming.

Thanks to the new Digital Millennium Copyright Act, if the RIAA downloads something from your hard drive (via Kazaa, WinMX or any other service, for that matter) and automatically acquires your IP address, it can find out who you are and slap you with a frighteningly large lawsuit. The RIAA is threatening to sue, potentially, thousands of people.

Verizon and Earthlink are appealing against the act; meanwhile, peer-to-peer developers continue to try to devise less traceable systems. **DOUGLAS WOLK**



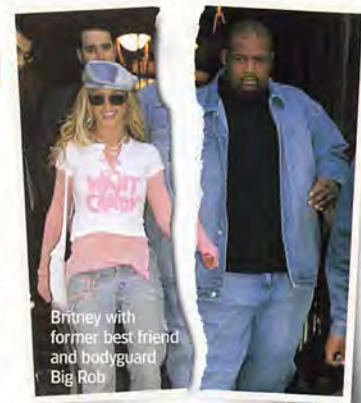
Lawsuit brought in April against teens with MP3 sites

UN-GUARD!

Is Britney Spears blaming her bodyguard for her own drug use?

→ **BRITNEY SPEARS HAS** fired her most trusted bodyguard, "Big Rob" Feggans, and he charges that his dismissal is linked to her revelations of drug use. In June, Spears admitted she has tried drugs but that it was "a mistake." Feggans feels he has been fired and unfairly blamed for her wilder lifestyle. He says he was the singer's "best friend" and that she "loved him." But now he's feeling "betrayed."

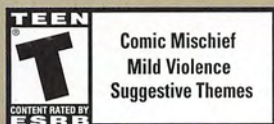
Spears's spokeswoman denied any connection between Feggans's departure and Spears's recent revelations. **PHIL SUTCLIFFE**



Britney with former best friend and bodyguard Big Rob



The ground only slows you down. F-Zero GX.
Race through twenty gravity-defying courses
at ridiculous speeds. It's the future of racing.



F-ZERO GX

Useful Tips From the Stars!

Bone Crusher, upon finding his hand has turned into a chicken



HOW TO...

Debone a Chicken

Before his hit single, "Never Scared," **Bone Crusher** (born Wayne Hardnett) studied cookery in his Atlanta hometown. Here, he reveals how to debone a chicken and avoid the worst smell he "ever smelt"!

BY ANSLEM SAMUEL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO

1 GET A KNIFE!

"Clean the chicken with water, and get your favorite cutting knife. A cleaver or even a lil' bitty knife — it doesn't matter. Just get the sharp-est one and split the chicken. Hold it up on the side and cut down between the rib cage and the back of the chicken. Then cut each leg — the drumstick and the thigh — off at the joint. On to the breasts. . . ."

2 CUT THE BREAST!

"If the breast is real big, cut it in half. Then cut off the back — that's extra chicken, and you don't need all that fat. Take the breast and cut between the underside bone and the meat and cut the whole [breast] bone. Cut the gristle, too. You might lose a lil' bit of the breast at first until you get good at it, but when you're done with that, you should have a nice fillet."

3 CUT THE LEG!

"Now, if you wanna debone the leg, cut the top part of the leg where the V-shaped bone is. Cut the thigh off, and take the knife and cut around the bone. The thigh is easy: You just cut on the inside of the bone, and it falls off. I don't know anyone who debones [the drumstick], but you can debone anything. Just cut around the bone and it'll fall right off."

4 TOSS IT!

"Keep the chicken as cold as possible, because it spoils real fast. My grandmother once bought chickens and left them out by mistake. An hour or two later, I walked past the room, and it was the worst smell I ever smelt in my life. Throw the bones and skin in the trash can outside. 'Cause ain't nothin' getting rid of that smell but wind and time."

→ BONE CRUSHER'S DEBUT ALBUM, **ATTENCHUN!** (SO SO DEF/ARISTA), IS OUT NOW.



We smooth out our whiskey by dripping it through 10 packed feet of charcoal, made from hard maple trees grown on high ground. In fact, you could say our **mellowing** process starts as sunlight on the trees, and ends as Jack Daniel's on the rocks.



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News Roundup!

Curly-haired *American Idol* star **JUSTIN GUARINI** was reprimanded by police in Grand Prairie, Texas, after he nearly hit a 5-year-old girl while riding a Jet Ski. He may face up to 180 days in jail or a \$2,000 fine.

JEWEL has promised that her forthcoming poetry book will contain verse of an overtly sexual nature. "I hope it's going to be a gift book, like something everyone gives to their boyfriend or girlfriend," she explained.

R&B star **BRANDY** and her husband, Robert Smith — the couple featured in MTV's pregnancy documentary *Diary Presents Brandy: Special Delivery* — have split after two years. They remain friends and have agreed to jointly raise their daughter, Sy'rai.

WORD!



"Little pop stars. They're just like little girls, man."

TRICKY, ON DEALING WITH THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS



Kelly Osbourne: Just like Dad! Sniff!

SHOCKED!

Is Kelly Osbourne's musical career going south?

» KELLY OSBOURNE'S singing career appears to be in peril after she was dropped by her record company and then booed offstage at a U.K. gig.

The 18-year-old singer was axed by her label, Sony, in May after her debut, *Shut Up*, logged disappointing sales.

Then, on June 22 at London's Millennium Dome, some of the 25,000 at the Snickers Game On festival threw plastic bottles and booed her offstage.

During the barrage, Osbourne screamed, "Fuck off! You might fucking well hate me, but I'm here for another half-hour." Finally, she ran offstage shouting, "Fuck you and your mother!"

"Kelly was a bit shocked," her spokeswoman acknowledged. "But she didn't cry, that's for sure."

"You like it when they love you, but you love it more when they hate you," the singer explained later. *PHIL SUTCLIFFE*



Jay ♥ Blender!

WE RULE!

Jay Leno and industry experts agree: We're the best!

» IT HAS BEEN a banner month for *Blender*. The ultimate music magazine was featured on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno* on June 2.

In addition, *Media Life*, an online publication that reports on media culture, named *Blender* one of the "Best of the Best" magazines in its annual industry overview.

In 2002, *Blender* was named magazine "Launch of the Year" by *Advertising Age*. *LAUREN HARRIS*



Never give Ludacris sugar after dinner.

In the Studio

"Chicken Fuels My Fire!"

Ludacris's new album, *Chicken & Beer*, is an ode to finger-licking poultry, Corona, three-ways and "flagrant ho's!" Cheers, mate!

» "YOU KNOW HOW they say a man's ultimate fantasy is to have two women at the same time?" asks Ludacris (né Chris Bridges), chuckling loudly. "Well, I can tell you from personal experience that two is better than one. That's what my new song 'Teamwork' is all about."

The Atlanta rapper — who notoriously claimed he had "ho's in different area codes" on 2001's "Area Codes" — also understands the drawbacks of having too many ladies. "Who Let These Ho's in My Room?", which features a cameo from Snoop Dogg, concerns "those girls you find in front of your hotel room on tour," he says, as if it's a universal dilemma. "It's scary — they're not supposed to know where the hell you're staying!"

Scheduled for release this fall,

the nearly completed *Chicken & Beer* (the follow-up to 2001's triple-platinum *Word of Mouf*) also includes "Blow It Out Your Ass." The explosive track is a response to Bill O'Reilly, the conservative Fox News personality who persuaded Pepsi to drop its sponsorship deal with Ludacris due to the rapper's allegedly "subversive" lyrics.

"Too Much" is a tongue-in-cheek critique of overindulgent drinkers and pot smokers, though Ludacris partakes of a depressant or two: "I smoke blunts," he admits, "and I drink a lot of alcoholic beverages." One such beverage, Corona, is second only to poultry as his favorite creative aid.

"That's why I'm calling the album *Chicken & Beer*," he enthuses. "Chicken fuels my fire!" *ROB KEMP*



Victoria "Posh" Beckham really liked *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

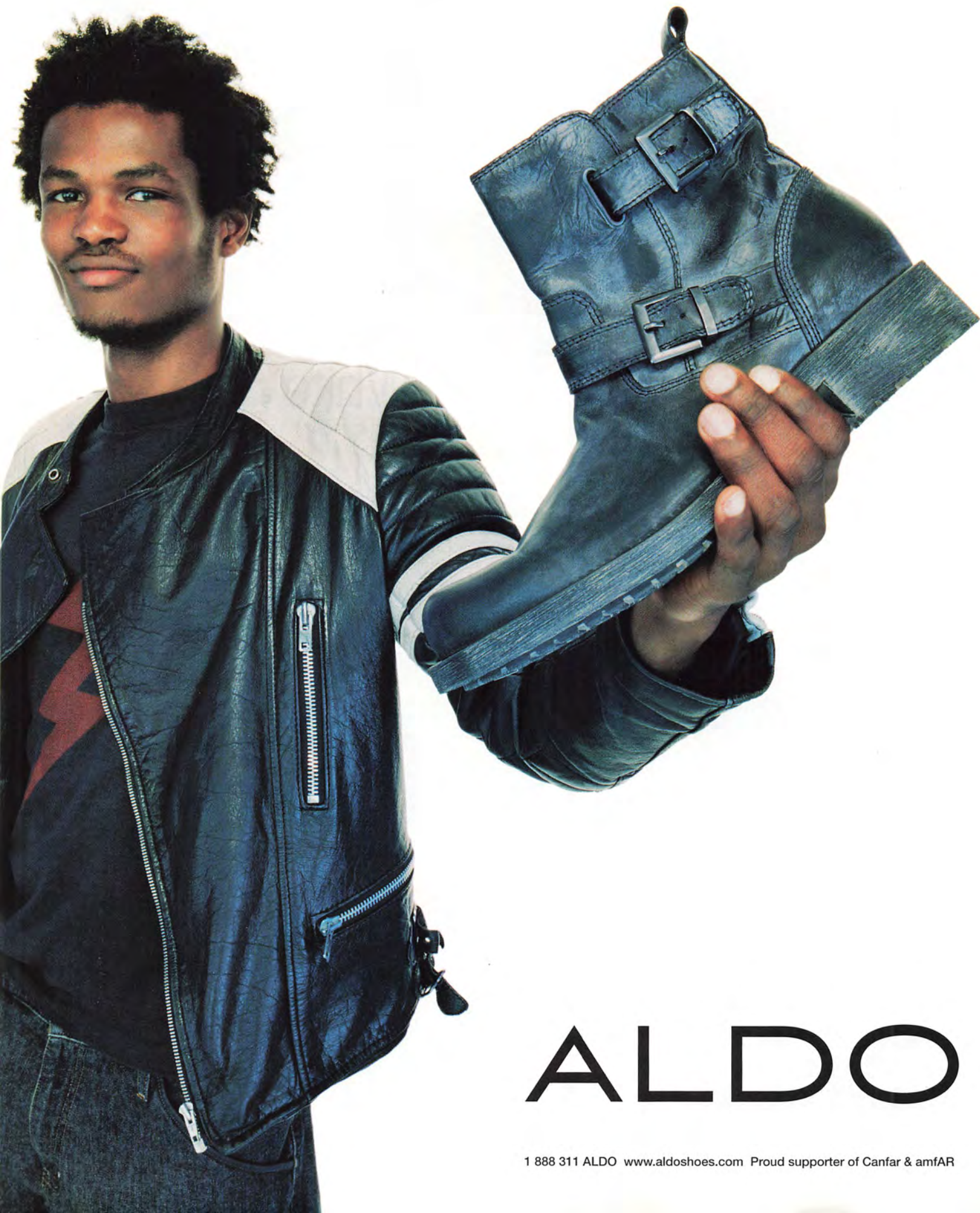
ALSO IN THE STUDIO >>>>

« Ex-Spice Girl **VICTORIA "POSH" BECKHAM** is recording tracks in New York with Ol' Dirty Bastard (a.k.a. Dirt McGirt), Cam'ron and Macy Gray for her second solo album, due in September. ...

Rap-metal stalwarts **KORN** are finishing their follow-up to *Untouchables* at singer Jonathan Davis's Los Angeles home studio for a year-end release. ...

Canadian ingénue **NELLY FURTADO** is recording the follow-up to the double-platinum *Whoa, Nelly!* at an undisclosed studio in L.A. with acid-jazz team Track and Field for a November 25 release. ...

Sneaker magnate/Beyoncé beau **JAY-Z** is finishing up the *Black Album*, his follow-up to last year's *The Blackprint 2.0*. He has promised that the new album will be his last. ...



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Joey Fatone and his big, hairy, hungry boi

BANANAS!

Is Joey Fatone losing his mind?

>> JOEY FATONE claims to be writing an album of song parodies, despite his record label's denial that he is doing so.

The 'N Sync member says he is working on a CD that will include song parodies in the tradition of Weird Al Yankovic. Fatone has so far transformed Creed's "Higher" into "Can You Change My Tire?" and Justin Timberlake's "Cry Me a River" into "Buy Me a Liver."

"[It's] about drinking too much alcohol," Fatone explained. "I want to do silly stuff, something stupid like that." He also says he wrote several pastiches of 'N Sync material too "dirty" to release.

Fatone's label, Jive Records, however, is contradicting his claims. "I don't know why he's talking about this," a label spokesman said. "There are no set plans." DAVID QUANTICK



J.Lo and Medina in happier, non-backstabbing times

DISCARDED?

J.Lo's dumped manager threatens to tell all about the diva!

>> JENNIFER LOPEZ'S ex-manager of five years is threatening to reveal details about the star in an attempt to stop her from badmouthing him.

"I look forward to having the world come to know the real Jennifer Lopez," said Benny Medina, responding to news that Lopez filed a petition with the California Labor Commissioner claiming Medina misappropriated money and procured work on her behalf despite not being a licensed talent agent.

"She's trying to add me to the list of people she has discarded after she took all she could get," he added. J.Lo was unavailable for comment. NOEL BODDIE

Obits

DAVE ROWBERRY
62, found dead June 6, in London, of an apparent heart attack. Keyboard player for the Animals. Rowberry replaced founding member Alan Price in 1965 and played on such hits as "Don't Bring Me Down" and "It's My Life."

TOMMY PERKINS
69, June 7, in Cotton County, Oklahoma, of injuries suffered in a car accident. A former drummer for Bob Wills, the King of Western Swing. Perkins was returning from a performance at the Legends of Western Swing Music Festival in Wichita Falls, Texas, when he drove off the road.

VIC TAYLOR
56, June 23, in Rockville Centre, New York, of cardiac arrest. Jamaican vocalist who performed with ska and reggae pioneers the Skatalites.

HERBIE MANN
73, July 1, in Pecos, New Mexico, of cancer. The most famous jazz flautist and a pioneering figure in world music whose Latin and Afro-jazz recordings crossed over to the pop charts.



Barry White, 2002

Barry White 1944–2003

The legendary soul singer and Walrus of Love, 58, died of kidney failure in Los Angeles on July 4

>> FOR A BEDROOM legend, Barry White didn't start out too smoothly. "I burglarized, I stole, I gangbanged," he once recalled.

Born Barry Carter in Galveston, Texas, he was diverted from the street life of South Central Los Angeles by a few "very horrible" months in jail when he was 16. Turning to music, he began an indie-label apprenticeship in which he notably coproduced Bob & Earl's immortal 1963 track "Harlem Shuffle." He emerged from his stint as the improbable but undisputed Walrus of Love.

"Sensuous, seductive, heavenly," White once described his lush-stringed, bass-heavy sound. From 1972 to 1976, he produced a run of panty-

moistening solo hits such as "Never, Never Gonna Give You Up" and "Can't Get Enough of Your Love, Babe" and chart-toppers for his backing trio, Love Unlimited (with second wife Glodean James), and his Love Unlimited Orchestra.

White could always turn on a live audience. Just one "loooooove" growl and women swooned, even as he twanged the elastic waistband of his spacious pants.

Before his death, White's career enjoyed a resurgence when both the Beastie Boys and 50 Cent sampled him in songs.

The soulful crooner leaves eight children. His girlfriend, Catherine Denton, gave birth to the youngest, daughter Barriana, last year. PHIL SUTCLIFFE

White produced a run of panty-moistening solo hits.



BARRY WHITE His greatest CDs



I'VE GOT SO MUCH TO GIVE
POLYGRAM, 1973

★★★★★

White, who had to be persuaded to be a solo artist, bookends his debut with smash hits.



CAN'T GET ENOUGH
POLYGRAM, 1974

★★★★★

Includes the disco anthem "You're the First, the Last, My Everything," a dance-floor classic.



BARRY WHITE'S GREATEST HITS
CASABLANCA, 1975

★★★★★

"Take off that brassiere, my dear": All of White's irony-free classics in one convenient package.



SHEET MUSIC
PRIORITY, 1980

★★★★★

Strictly for the bedroom. The original release had an order form for Barry White brand bed sheets. DAVID HILL

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YOU SEND QUESTIONS, WE GET ANSWERS. WHO LOVES YA, BABY?

Iggy Pop

➔ He's a street-walking cheetah with a heart full of napalm. Plus, he used to poo on the back porch! Brace yourself as we go back in time with rock's "godfather of nihilistic horseshit." What was it like to puke up green bile, abuse opium and play with those naughty Stooges? "It's hard to explain," sighs rock's real wild one. . . .

BY ROB TANNENBAUM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANK OCKENFELS 3

★ IGGY POP SAYS hello the way a dog does: inches from your face, with a bark, his Midwestern baritone deep and charred. The former James Newell Osterberg, son of a schoolteacher, put the canine spirit into rock when he founded the Stooges in late-'60s Detroit, lashing out at Woodstock hand-holders with such bummer anthems as "I Wanna Be Your Dog" and "Gimme Danger." Before shows, he'd take "two grams of biker speed, five tabs of LSD and as much grass as could be inhaled." His name became a symbol of rock at its most extreme.

He tired of his reputation ("the fucked-up godfather of nihilistic horseshit," as he once said) and gradually kicked drugs, took on David Bowie as a patron and wrote some enduring hits ("Lust for Life," "China Girl," "Nightclubbing"). This year, he agreed to a Stooges reunion, the group's first since its 1973 decay, and his new album, *Skull Ring*, includes four songs recorded with the Stooges.

Pop steps into a Miami photo studio, his body a youthful cord of gristle under a blue mesh shirt, all 56 years lined into his sunken gray eyes and desert cheeks. A charming conversationalist, he's excited to answer readers' questions. "No offense," he says, "I'd rather have their questions than yours. There's a little more levity. . . ."



What did it take to incite a Stooges reunion? And have they forgiven you for writing the mean song "Dum Dum Boys" about them?

CLARKOO, TROY, NEW YORK

[Laughs] That song was all Bowie's idea: "Write a song about the Stooges; call it 'Dum Dum Boys.'" He egged me on. It took the unrelenting love and determination of the drummer, Rock [Scott Ashton], who kept calling every year or two. I thought, "My God, a Stooges reunion? I'm gonna have 30 bikers in my bathroom shooting up crystal meth. I'm gonna have baby-mamas outside the studio. I can't take it."

I decided to record with a lot of people, and after thinking about who's cool, they were number 1. After them, it was Justin Timberlake and Puff Daddy. I would love to work with Justin Timberlake! The record company looked on in horror. They said, "Oh, very funny." I bet he'd do it, though. Ah, well — next record.

You grew up in a trailer home in Detroit. Do you object to the term *trailer trash*?

BIGLARRY, YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN

No, I love it. When I was a kid, I took a lot of hazing about it, especially from the more macho elements of the upper class. I used to be on the verge of tears. They'd shake the trailer and laugh at me. Now, the biggest singer in America, Eminem, is trailer trash. Soon, the whole country will be living in an RV.

What, to you, is uniquely Detroit about Eminem and the White Stripes?

SCOOTER, WAYNE, MICHIGAN

They're two steps out of the mainstream. In Detroit, you can do something you think is cool, and even if they don't think you're cool in New York City, it doesn't matter — you can still get fucked and get stoned, because everything is so cheap. You can create your own world.

Who still calls you by your given name, Jim?

RASPUTIN, HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

David Bowie, when he calls every two or three years. All the members of the Stooges. People I've known a long time, or smart alecks. Guys with really safe, Anglicized names like Jeremy get bugged by the idea that you can make up a goofy name like Iggy Pop and make it stick.

I'm 26 years old, and I have love handles. You're 56 with a six-pack. What's your workout regimen?

WUBBY, HONOLULU

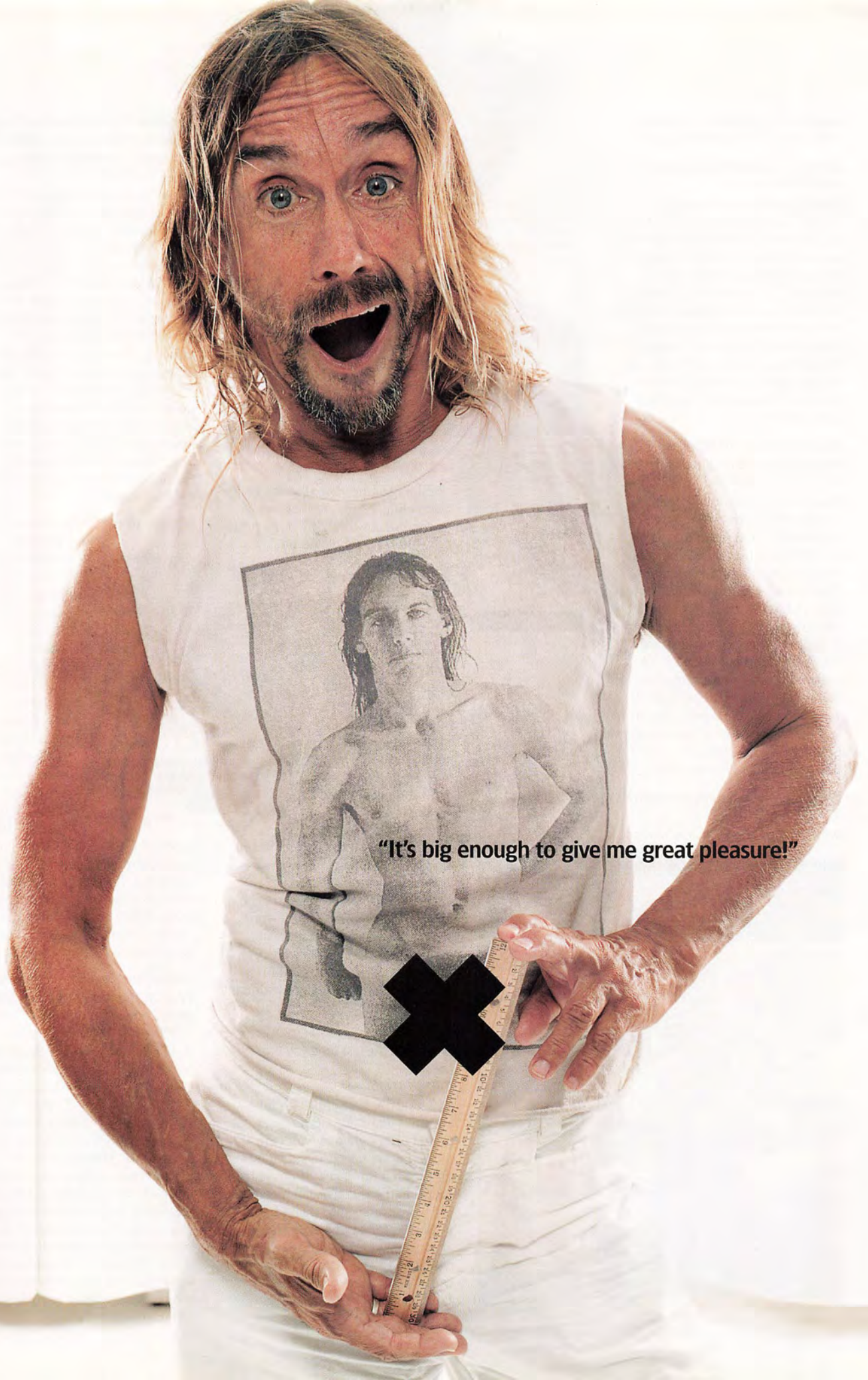
I do about 40 minutes a day of *qi gong*, the fundamental exercises of tai chi. It looks like nothing, but if you learn from somebody who knows the shit, it's really hard. Or I'll swim about 200 yards in a pool, just to get a little bulk. I'm about 140 pounds, but I was a big boy when I graduated high school — 160 ➔

DEAR SUPERSTAR >>>

Got a question you're desperate to ask a superstar? Let *Blender* be your intermediary. Send your questions to us, and we'll put the smartest to the world's greatest music stars. Neat, huh?

Just check out blender.com for upcoming interviews. Then be sure to put your name and contact information on your question. Good luck!

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E-mail: superstar@blender.com



"It's big enough to give me great pleasure!"

pounds. Singers look funny at 160, unless you're in Lynyrd Skynyrd.

All right, already: How big is it?
BERGMAN, NEW YORK CITY

[Laughs] I was wondering that myself. I wrote a book [*I Need More*] in 1981, and I think I claimed that it was 11 1/2 inches when actually going. It looks about that. It's probably . . . 10-ish. It's big enough to give me great pleasure. I do enjoy it. I'll see it sometimes and I'll say, "Ahh. Everything's cool." My little companion. It's more guys who are fascinated. With women, it comes up once: "Hey, you're built like a black guy."

Was *Raw Power*, the Stooges' 1973 album, supposed to sound like shit?
GRAMMA33, VAIL, COLORADO

Jesus, that's tricky. It's a great record. When I put it on, it exceeds my estimation in mystique, rhythmic and lyrical skills and its ability to give joy and excitement. Which is something that has just gone right out of music — except for the little black guy with blond hair [Sisqó] singing about thongs for people in elementary school. The guitar and vocal sounds [on *Raw Power*], which are both very good, were deliberate decisions. The drum and bass were lacking, because the producer — me — became unhinged during the sessions.

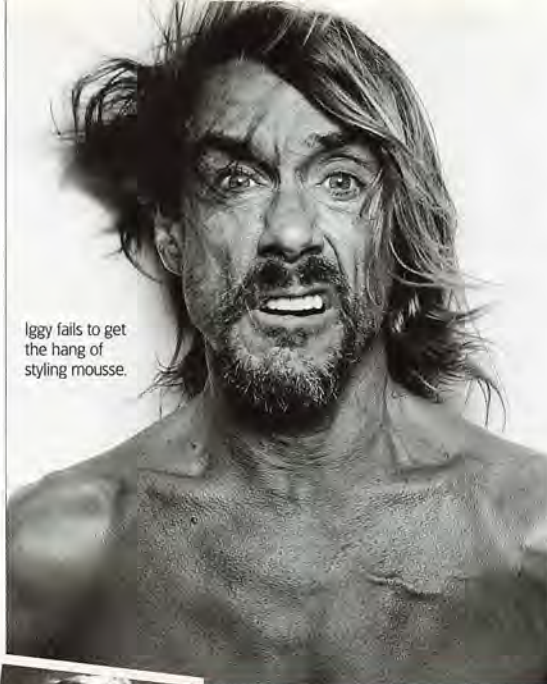
What was your personal low point?
ROSE99, NEW YORK CITY

Waking up alone in an abandoned

"I would love to work with Justin Timberlake!"



The Stooges, 1973



Iggy fails to get the hang of styling mousse.



Iggy at age 17



Raw Power, 1973



Joey Fatone has sure let himself go.



"What show are we on again?"

building somewhere behind Hollywood Boulevard, puking strange green bile. I was ahead of my time: Now there's a whole homeless theme, and squats. I invented street cred! My only alternative was to nail a well-known publicist in Hollywood who would put me up for a few days. That was pretty low.

There was another period in the early '80s when I was constantly drunk and breaking random limbs. I was in Japan, and they knew I was an important artist — at least they thought so — and they bought 7,000 very expensive tickets. I came out drunk and couldn't remember the words. Here I was in a beautiful theater, with a lot of people who were interested in my culture, and I thought, "Gee, you really let yourself down tonight." That made a big impression.

When was the last time you did heroin?

PILLPOPPER, LAS VEGAS

[Pauses] 1981 for heroin, '83 for opium. I had a long transitional period until I got to where I am today. I don't take drugs. I enjoy a glass of red Bordeaux. If I have two, I'll get loopy and start talking about my penis. A few days ago, I had a gig in Boston for a radio station, and after two glasses of wine, they wanted to talk to me. Sure enough, out came the forbidden subject. "Oh, no! I did it again!"

It's spring 1976, and you've recently moved from Los Angeles to Berlin to kick drugs. Describe a typical day.

PORKYPINE, WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

Get up in the morning on the fourth floor of a cold-water building and take a sponge bath. Cut a little brown bread and cheese — I had a knife, one knife — and eat. Then walk all over the city, which hadn't changed since 1910: organ grinders who still had monkeys; quality transvestite shows. A different world. By evening, I'd go have dinner with the Bowies, see a film or watch *Starsky and Hutch* — that was our big thing, me and Bowie. If there wasn't enough to do, I knew some bad people, and I'd get stoned or drunk. Sometimes I'd do the bad stuff with the Bowies and the good stuff with the bad people.

Why did you decide to move to Miami in 1998?

HELPER101, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

I had a life change in New York — there was a divorce, and it was time to go. I went for coffee, and two students with a script were having a conversation next to me. One of them dropped a piece of paper, and I picked it up. It said,

"That's Iggy Pop."

Ask him — he has

money." By contrast, there's a ridiculous optimism in Miami, a baseless optimism. It's five degrees north of redneck, then grafted on is a lot of things I like: Haitian culture, Latin culture. I live in a good Hasidic neighborhood, near a bagel store.

I heard "Lust for Life" on a cruise-ship TV ad. Is there any advertiser you've turned down?

FINCHY, ITHACA, NEW YORK

No! I got a fax asking if Bruce Willis could sing new lyrics to "Search and Destroy" for the new *Rugrats* movie — "I'm sick of my chew toy," or something — and I OK'd that, because it was so stupid. The main thing is, the Stooges get in the media. That ensures our preservation as a band, through impressing corrupted people for the wrong reasons. Now those motherfuckers are impressed with me. Hell, if I was R.E.M., I sure as hell wouldn't let my songs be used for an ad either. Their songs already sound so fucking



Iggy and Bowie try "cool economics prof" look, 1985

prissy. But any time you hear the Stooges, it'll fucking stop the room, and people drop things.

I've heard many versions of a 1973 incident involving you, Elton John and a gorilla suit. Which one is right?

CHAVEZ, CHICAGO

I believe that was the last Stooges tour, the one that culminated in a near-riot in Detroit. I was very stoned from some sort of debacle the night before, and I wasn't even in shape to stand up. I shuffled out to the stage, just trying to get through 50 minutes. I look to my left, and a great fucking gorilla is lumbering toward the stage. I was scared. Then I realized it wasn't a real gorilla. Elton picked me up and danced around in a benign fashion. I think he had a crush on James [Williamson, the Stooges' guitarist]. James was the hottie.

I've read that you're a history buff. Who's your favorite Roman emperor?

SQUAREBIZSF, SAN FRANCISCO

Probably Tiberius. He talked democracy while he practiced autocracy — he mirrored our present emperor, George Bush.

What do you think happens to you when you die?

SHIZZA, AMES, IOWA

Probably a varied recounting of your own decisions, a series of flashbacks. I imagine that this repeats and repeats, like dreaming. I did an interview last week, and they said, "Who would you like to come back as?" I said, "Johnny Depp." I'd like to be better-looking next time.

Are you a good father?

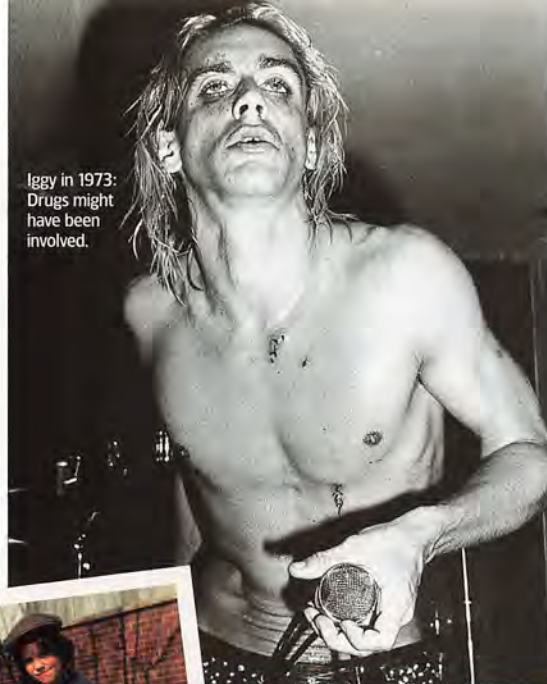
JACK JONES, FOREST HILLS, NEW YORK

No. I wasn't in a position to be. I had no stable career. While I did some very important work, I didn't get rewarded for any of that work until much later — until now, frankly. I started working on that once he [son Eric, sometimes known as "Ewreck"] hit about 19, and I did OK. He's up and running, working in the rock industry [mostly as a tour manager]. Educated. Rehabbed. Married. Kid.

I'm a gay 22-year-old, and I love your music. Please come clean: What's the extent of your gay experiences?

LILBITCH, LOS ANGELES

Iggy in 1973: Drugs might have been involved.



Iggy and son Eric in Detroit, 1977

Very simple. I always got a lot of support from those people, and I learned from a lot of really talented gay people. I'm to the left of tolerant, but I've never had a gay experience. Two or

three times, excited gay friends wanted to, like, nibble my nuts — generally when I was passed out or distracted. And then I'd go, "Hey! Bruce! Cut it out!" And that would be the end of that. The gayest it got is some guy approaching my scrotum with oral intent. I was



When Harry Met Iggy (and Got Felt Up)

mistaken for gay at a Bowie concert once, because of my flamboyant dress and friendly manner, and a bunch of California toughs beat the shit out of me. Fifteen stitches. I thought to myself, "So this is what it's like."

Here's a historical question: Who invented punk rock?

DONNAP, ATLANTA

Jack Johnson [a 1920s boxing champion] — the first uppity nigger. Then you had black people playing rock & roll, scaring the Ku Klux Klan, but it took a white guy, Elvis, to add the sneer. The sneer is the key gesture of punk. From Elvis, it goes up through the Rolling Stones, and I'm a kid watching the Stones, thinking, "What if . . . ?" And away you go. To me, the Stooges never played punk rock. We did things that led to it.

When you and the Stooges shared a house in Ann Arbor, Michigan, legend has it that you regularly did number two on the back porch. Tru dat?

DOGMASTER, WAYNE, NEW JERSEY

[Laughs] Yes. It's hard to explain. I was trying to get close to nature. I also never sat on chairs. It was a little bit caveman. I was also taking psychedelic drugs.

Is there anyone in music now who reminds you of your younger self?

JRLINCOLN, TEMPE, ARIZONA

Mmm, bits and pieces. Jack White's hairdo and pants. Anthony Kiedis's hairdo and pants. Bono's hairdo and — hey, wait a minute! [BLENDER]

Iggy finally spots the man who stole his shirt.





- Red Rodeo Band
- Green Jackson Trio
- Blue Orderly Love
- Purple Joker MC

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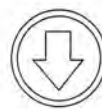
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BLENDER EXPLORES THE FINEST TUNES IN HISTORY



Higher Ground

Convinced he was about to die, a youthful **Stevie Wonder** sat down to write a song about the afterlife. It turned out to be a classic, but did it also eerily predict the car accident that nearly killed him?



STEVIE WONDER HAS written songs that make people laugh, cry and dance, and that sometimes even change their lives. That's as much as any artist can hope for, but in 1973, Wonder went much further and wrote a song that may very well have saved his own life.

"'Higher Ground' was a very special song," he explained in John Swenson's 1986 biography, *Stevie Wonder*. "I wrote it on May 11. I remember the date. I did the whole thing — the words, the music and recorded the track — in three hours. That's the first time I ever finished a song so fast. It was almost as if I had to get it done. I felt something was going to happen. I didn't know what or when, but I felt something."

Wonder wrote "Higher Ground" for his sixteenth album, *Innervisions*, which was also his third collaboration with Robert Margouleff and Malcolm Cecil, sonic architects who had helped him transform the soulful pop of his "Little Stevie Wonder" years into the groundbreaking funk that characterized his coming of age.

"Stevie turned 21 on the thirteenth of May 1971," Cecil explains. "When you turn 21 in this

country, any contracts you made prior are null and void, because you're no longer a minor." Because of this, when Cecil and Margouleff met Wonder just seven days after his twenty-first birthday, he was bursting with new songs written over the previous three years. He hadn't recorded them, because he knew any publishing profits would have gone to Motown Records' publishing arm, Jobete Music.

With his contract renegotiated, Wonder was ready to start recording. Within hours of encountering Cecil and Margouleff in New York's Electric Ladyland studio, Wonder was working with them on



Stevie Wonder in 1974: "Does anyone else smell dead rabbit?"

VITAL STATISTICS

SONG
"Higher Ground"

ARTIST
Stevie Wonder

LABEL
Tamla/Motown

PERFORMER
Stevie Wonder
all instruments
and vocals

PRODUCERS
Stevie Wonder
and Bob
Margouleff

RELEASED
July 31, 1973

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
4

WEEKS ON CHART
14

new sounds that would alter the sonic palette of popular music.

"Bob Margouleff and Malcolm Cecil are responsible for [synthesizer] programming," Wonder told *Rolling Stone* in 1973. "I just tell them the kind of sound I want."

Their fruitful collaboration had started with the 1972 album *Music of My Mind* and continued on to *Talking Book* (also 1972) and *Innervisions*. So while it's true, and fairly astonishing, that Wonder not only wrote the music and lyrics for "Higher Ground" but also played all the instruments and co-produced the track, the electronic sounds he used were largely generated by Margouleff and Cecil.

Thus, when Wonder started building the track from his clavinet, he played it through a new sound-filtering device, the Mu-Tron III, which gave the keyboard a sound similar to the wah-wah effect so beloved of guitarists at the time. Thanks to Margouleff and Cecil's familiarity with such high-end technology, the track sounded like nothing that had come before.

The two producers, however, can't claim any responsibility for the fact that Wonder laid down his irresistibly danceable clavinet groove — the foundation of the entire song — with no drums and not even a click track, relying entirely on his internal sense of rhythm to keep time.

What's more, the artist who had once been content to warble "Shoo-Be-Doo-Be-Doo-Da-

Day" wrote lyrics for

"Higher Ground" that were even more mind-blowing than the music. Wonder had become gripped by the idea that his life was reaching a turning point emotionally, spiritually and physically, to

WHO'S WHO >>>



STEVIE WONDER
Blind genius who scored his first hit for Motown at age 12. He became the most innovative composer in popular music in the early 1970s.



BOB MARGOULEFF
Half of pioneering synthesizer duo T.O.N.T.O.'s Expanding Head Band. Now runs the cutting-edge company Mi Casa Multimedia.



MALCOLM CECIL
The other half of T.O.N.T.O.'s Expanding Head Band; is still making music and producing and mastering records in New York.



IRA TUCKER JR.
Wonder's longtime friend and public-relations advisor; son of Ira Tucker, the leader of gospel group the Dixie Hummingbirds.



Innervisions (1973)



> "This is my second chance for life."

such an extent that he felt his death might be imminent. He poured this sentiment into lyrics that dealt with progression toward a higher spiritual plane through reincarnation.

Innervisions was released on July 31, 1973, and, just six days later, on the way to a gig at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, Wonder was severely injured in a car accident. By the time he was taken to the North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem, Wonder was in a coma.

"I couldn't even recognize him," recalled his longtime friend

and public-relations advisor Ira Tucker Jr. "His head was swollen up to about five times its normal size — and nobody could get through to him."

With his vital signs perilously poor, Wonder remained comatose for nearly a week, until Tucker decided that perhaps the healing powers of medicine could use a boost from a more spiritual resource. "I got right down in his ear and sang 'Higher Ground,'" Tucker explained. "His hand was resting on my arm, and after a while his fingers started going in

time with the song. I said, 'Yeah! This dude is gonna make it!'"

Wonder's recovery was not instantaneous, but he and Tucker remain convinced that his hearing "Higher Ground" was the turning point. In a statement issued shortly after he got out of the hospital, Wonder declared, "The only thing I know is that I was unconscious and that for a few days I was definitely in a much better spiritual place that made me aware of a lot of things that concern my life and my future and what I have to do to reach another higher ground."

Reflecting on the experience a year later for *Crawdaddy* magazine, he said, "What happened to me was a very, very critical thing, and I was really supposed to die." He noted his growing belief in reincarnation, explaining, "I wrote 'Higher Ground' even before the accident. But something must have been telling me that something was going to happen to make me aware of a lot of things and to get myself together. This is my second chance for life."

However, not everyone around him felt he fully seized that second chance. "Stevie became much more controlling and less free with himself," Margouleff says. "I think he began to realize that he was mortal. He took a lot of medication after the accident, because it was very severe. I think it gave him a very different perspective on his life. He became more and more famous, and we became less and less important."

That's sour grapes, perhaps, because Margouleff and Cecil were now on their way out of Wonder's inner circle — but few critics would disagree with the notion that the essence of Wonder's creative genius remains distilled on those early-'70s collaborations and, effectively, ended with *Innervisions*.

None of this, however, diminishes "Higher Ground," which remained on the charts for 14 weeks, landing in the Top 10 on September 29, 1973. It remains a classic, covered by artists as diverse as Michael McDonald and the Red Hot Chili Peppers. The song even won a Grammy this year as the title track of the latest album from veteran gospel group the Blind Boys of Alabama. *JOHNNY BLACK*





Sheryl Crow auditions for Whitesnake.

Is there any truth to those rumors that Sheryl Crow and Michael Jackson were romantically involved when she sang backup for him? Please say no!

SYDNEY SIMPSON, PLANO, TEXAS

OK, then . . . no. The pair didn't get intimate, but Crow's brush with Jacko's world was still pretty unpleasant.

During the 1987 *Bad* tour, the unknown former waitress wore a permed blond wig and had to perform a mushy duet on "I Just Can't Stop Loving You." Even worse, Jackson's people went into overdrive spreading the story that he and Crow were an item; Wacko himself reportedly said she would make "the perfect mother for my baby."

She later assured everyone that nothing happened, but she claimed she did have some upsetting experiences with Jackson's manager, Frank DiLeo (a line in Crow's "The Na-Na Song," from 1994, goes: "... Frank DiLeo's dong/ Maybe if I'd let him, I'd have had a hit song"). She blamed Jackson's "mafioso management" for the fact that she spent "a certain amount of time in therapy after I came home." Sounds pretty, uh, bad.

Were the kids singing on James Brown's "Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)" not actually black?

NICK DELONG, TORONTO

Some were black, but most of the kids singing the chorus "I'm black and I'm proud" on the Godfather's black-power anthem were white or Asian.

According to Brown, the people responsible for bringing their children to the session never showed up because it was well past the kids' bedtime. So the band worked on the track through the night until it was really cooking. First thing in the morning, Brown sent everyone in the studio to fetch kids off the street; backup singer Bobby Byrd corralled some from a nearby Denny's restaurant.

The dozen they eventually assembled were a mixed lot. Still, judging by the performances, the kids obviously got into spirit of things anyway. *Owww!*

What is the Eagles' legendary hit "Hotel California" about?

DANNY NINO, VIA E-MAIL

It's not about a hotel in Todos Santos, Mexico, or a mental hospital in Ventura County. And it's definitely not a tribute to Anton La Vey's Church of Satan (as many '70s stoners decided). Nor is it simply about a brothel or coke addiction, either.

The hotel was actually a metaphor for the excess and apathy that Don Henley



Marianne Faithfull: "Mick, we need to talk about our relationship." Mick Jagger: "Zzzzz. . ."

I recently heard that the Beatles' "And Your Bird Can Sing" was written about Mick Jagger and his then-girlfriend, Marianne Faithfull. Can this really be true?

ELLIS CHURCH, PORTLAND, MAINE

➤ This *Revolver* song is rumored to be a hipper-than-thou dig by John Lennon at Jagger, his friend and rival, and Faithfull, Jagger's singing "bird" — British slang for girl. While that was never 100 percent confirmed, Lennon's fondness for the term and his love of

put-downs and word games make the story pretty believable.

Also shortening the odds is Paul McCartney's recent revelation that "Blackbird" was about a fictitious black "bird." Introducing the song on his new DVD, *Back in the U.S.*, McCartney says, "This was written in the '60s, when there were a lot of troubles over civil rights. In England, sometimes we call girls 'birds.' I kind of wrote this song with that in mind." Thanks, Paul, for making a great song feel rather cheesy!



Dr. James Brown writes a prescription for "funk."

YOUR QUESTIONS ➤

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Please include your
first and last name,
your hometown
and your state or
province. Cool!

saw not just in Los Angeles but in mid-'70s America, where "the magic seems to be missing" but people carried on getting wasted anyway. "I was simply using California as a microcosm for the rest of America and for the self-indulgence of our entire culture," Henley said.



The sun shines out of the Eagles' behinds.

What about that weird, much-debated line about "the warm smell of colitas"? "It's supposedly Spanish for bud," Henley said. "I was looking for a way to describe the smell of lit weed." We told you it was about pot, dude. . .

In David Gray's "Say Hello, Wave Goodbye," does he quote the ramblings from the end of Van Morrison's "Madame George"?

TRIP VOSS, VIA E-MAIL

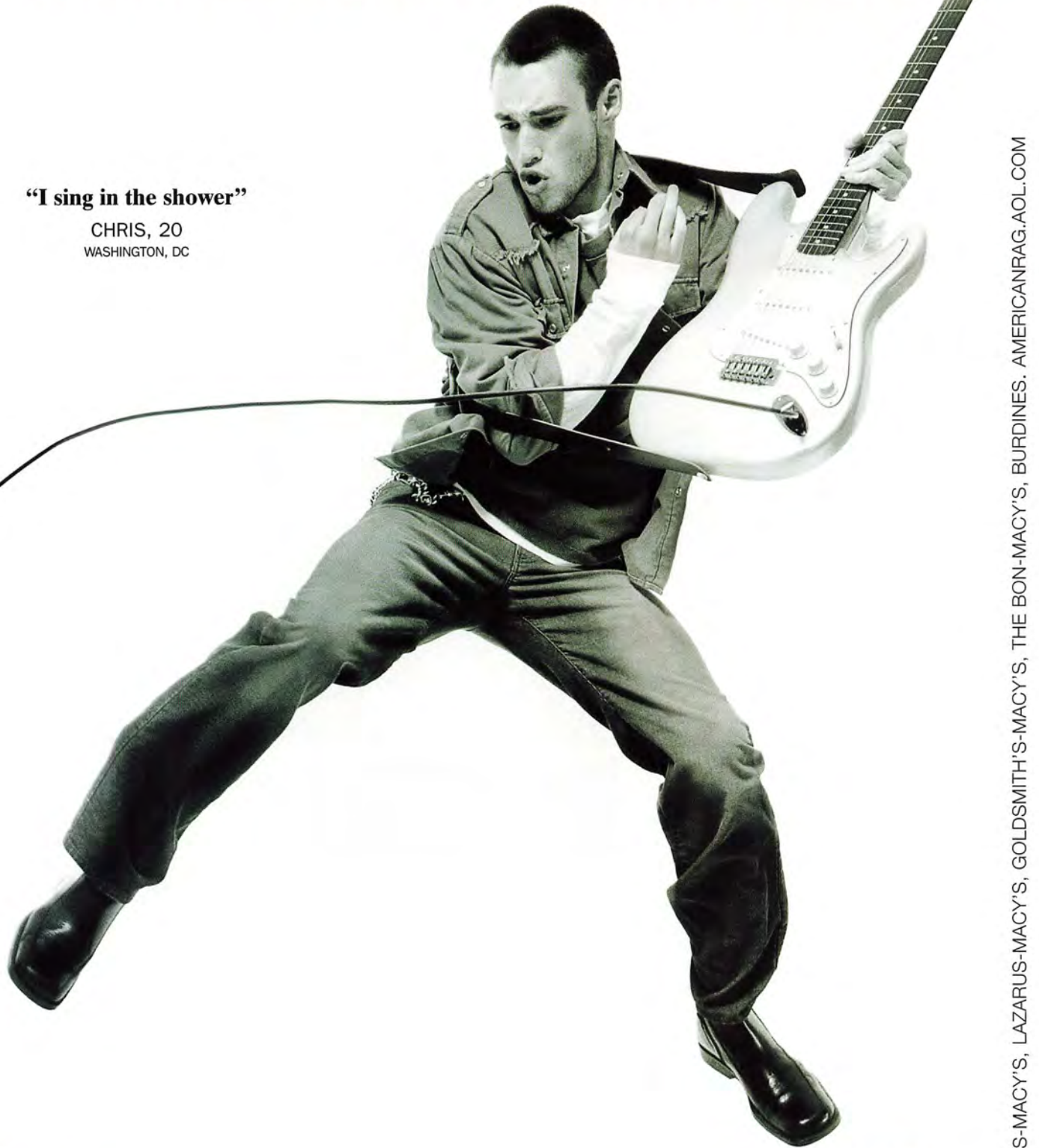


Yes. Top marks for spotting the *Astral Weeks* lyrics in Gray's cover of Soft Cell's "Say Hello" — although you missed the phrases he nabbed from Morrison's 1970 song "Into the Mystic." Why the Morrison homage? "If there was one album that has profoundly affected me over a long period of time, it would be *Astral Weeks*," Gray admits. [BLENDER]

I'M AN AMERICAN

"I sing in the shower"

CHRIS, 20
WASHINGTON, DC



AMERICAN RAG Cie
Fiercely Original Clothes

→ Virginal pop princess **Jessica Simpson** is back with a new album, her own MTV reality series and a bombshell bedroom confession: "I've been making up for lost time," she tells *Blender*

BY NICK DUERDEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUDSON BAKER

The Girl Next Door



THIS IS A VERY modern, all-American love story. It features a girl and a guy at home in their lavish Los

Angeles mansion, a reality-TV camera crew filming everything they do and a nationwide audience.

The show is called *The Newlyweds*, and it's being billed as MTV's answer to *I Love Lucy*, or the functional flip side to *The Osbournes*. She and he — just married, as the title suggests — are famous singers, and both are attractive — she sexy, he handsome. The show will feature laughter, tears, allusions to lovemaking and corn flakes for breakfast.

But there's more. As luck would have it, both have new albums out this summer, and she has just published a book on how to host the perfect celeb-style wedding. It's called *I Do*. "It's not just for high-class people," she says, "but for the lower classes, too." Lastly, a joint tour this fall is a distinct possibility. All of which means that for the next few months at least, there will be no escaping Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey.

"MTV is a very powerful network, and it makes regular stars into superstars," she says. "I'm not just doing it for the publicity, but also because I'm a very generous and open person. You know, I'm the girl next door, everybody's best friend. I wanted my fans to be able to experience my life with me."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

JESSICA SIMPSON turned 23 this summer, which marks her fourth anniversary in the public eye. More than a decade earlier, encouraged by her father, a Baptist minister who would one day become her manager, the Texas teen tried out for *The Mickey Mouse Club* alongside Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. They sailed through the audition. Simpson didn't. But she refused to give up, and by age 18, after a successful spell on the Christian-music circuit, she had



Now you've gone and made Jessica Simpson mad...

"I mean, is remaining a virgin until marriage so unusual?"



impressed Sony boss Tommy Mottola into offering her a contract. She was blond, beautiful and wholesome, and possessed a voice that could fill a power ballad with heart, soul and a whole lot of oxygen. Her 1999 debut, *Sweet Kisses*, sold more than 4 million copies.

Around that time, she began dating 98 Degrees hunk Nick Lachey, a man seven years her senior and, it is probably fair to suggest, sexually active. But not with Simpson, he wasn't. His new girlfriend was fiercely religious and had pledged to remain chaste until she walked down the aisle. Far from being embarrassed by her prudence, she turned it into a cunning marketing tool, crying it from the rooftops until she became the country's most famous virgin.

"I never made a big deal about my virginity," she claims now. "I had no idea the press would make such a fuss."

Really?

"Absolutely. I mean, is remaining a virgin until marriage so unusual? Have I grown up in such a protective bubble?"

General consensus would suggest, overwhelmingly, yes — for here was a young woman with the body of Pamela Anderson but the morals of *Little House on the Prairie*'s Laura Ingalls. Her record company decided to "sex up" her image for her second album, 2001's *Irresistible*. For a while, Simpson was game, but her father harbored many reservations. She now refers to that time as "my dark period."

"They wanted me to chase that whole Britney/teen-pop thing that was exploding all around," she

recalls, "but the thing is, it wasn't me. I spent too much time doing what everybody else wanted me to do, like a puppet."

Confused, she decided to split from Lachey, convinced she needed freedom and — no, really — some wild times. "Basically," she grins, "I needed to try out some different boyfriends."

But in the mental battle of Pamela Anderson versus Laura Ingalls, Laura Ingalls won. Simpson says she became miserable; the men she dated were "scum." As she talks about this, she becomes very serious, but then, confusingly, she starts to laugh. "I'm kidding. I'm kidding! There weren't that many men, and they weren't all scum!"

So just how many men did she date?

"Um, just one, actually. But it was a horrible experience. It made me realize there was only ever one man in the world for me." Her eyes well up. "You know what? Nick completes me."

Irresistible bombed, September 11 happened, and the two events drove her back into the tattooed arms of her true love. A year later, they were married in Hawaii and, yes, promptly did what all of America was expecting them to do. →

"Can I borrow
a cup of
sugar?" "Yes!"

DRESS BY PLEIN SUD



"It was the most amazing moment of my life," she says readily, right hand on left breast, her long fingers seeking out the excited pitter-patter of her heartbeat. "I'm so lucky I didn't lose my virginity in the back of a Jeep or something. Instead, I had this amazing, elaborate wedding, and I topped it off with that."

She wasn't troubled, apparently, by first-night nerves.

"No way! Nick and I had been together for four years. Believe me," she says, conveying innocence again, fluttering her eyelids and offering a coy smile, "I was very ready for the occasion. I've been making up for lost time ever since!"

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THIS AFTERNOON, Simpson finds herself 3,000 miles away from Los



Marrying Nick Lachey, 2002 (above); with sister Ashley and father Joe, 2000 →



Angeles and the pressures of reality TV. "And there is pressure," she confesses. "Pressure to entertain the audience. It's tough sometimes." But she's still in the

spotlight, because much of today is spent at MTV's summer beach house in the Hamptons to plug *In This Skin*, her third album and,

officially, she notes, "the most in-love record I've ever made." She's very keen to talk about the music, and keener still to talk about its inspiration — her private life. *In This Skin*'s new single, "Sweetest Sin," for

example, is all about sex.

"And why not? I'm 23 years old, a fully grown woman and married," she says, beaming. "Life is great! I've called the album *In This Skin* because I'm so happy being me. For a while, I felt I was losing my sense of artistry, but I found it again, which is important when you consider that so many of my fans look up to me as a positive role model."

She is insistent that she no longer hides behind a contrived facade. "Unlike other singers, I'm not about wearing leather and chains, or trying to be cutting-edge and cool," she says. "I think that's so cheesy. I just want to be classy." She smiles, revealing perfect white teeth. "What I'd like to be is the Julia Roberts of music — a wholesome beauty, but also sexual, you know?"

There's more she wants to say — further meditations on success, wealth, her desire for a family — but it's time to leave. She has a plane to catch. A camera crew, eager to resume filming her life through a lens, awaits at LAX. Blond, curvaceous, moderately famous but about to become significantly more so, Jessica Simpson has her sights set sky-high.

"Motion pictures is the way I see myself going," she says. As she steps elegantly into a waiting car, she reveals that she is soon to star in a big-screen adaptation of another Marvel comic. "Movies have been an incredible dream of mine for so long now, and it's about to become reality. I am truly blessed."

The car pulls slowly away, and as it passes a group of fans congregated at the exit, Jessica Simpson slips into her sunglasses and offers the little celebrity wave that she has spent much of her young life perfecting. [BLENDER]

"I'd like to be the Julia Roberts of music — wholesome but sexual."

★

Illustration by Gay Ham. Joe: Buisson/WireImage.com (Simpson and Lachey); Tammie Arroyo/PI (Simpson and family); Gavin Wickham/Eye Ubiquitous/Corbis (Mother Teresa); Alphonse Teymonde (still-life)

PRaise the LORD! IT'S ...

Six More Hot Devout Christians!

ORIGINAL HOT DEVOUT CHRISTIAN MARY MAGDALENE

Mary was a prostitute who witnessed the risen Jesus. According to Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, she was alluring enough to give Jesus second thoughts about the whole Messiah thing. And it takes an extremely hot lady to tempt the Big Guy.

LITERALLY HOT DEVOUT CHRISTIAN SAINT JOAN OF ARC

Joan was a peasant who heard voices telling her to lead the French to victory against the English. She did, but was burned at the stake in 1431.

Joan was stunning, at least according to Hollywood: She's been played by such cuties as Ingrid Bergman (1948) and Milla Jovovich (1999).

UNEXPECTEDLY HOT DEVOUT CHRISTIAN MOTHER TERESA

Decades of helping the destitute will age anyone, but back in the day ... ring-a-ding-ding! And yes, fantasizing about Mother Teresa is a fast track to hell.

NATIVE AMERICAN HOT DEVOUT CHRISTIAN POCAHONTAS

She's famed for saving John Smith, and many Christians argue she's most important for reportedly being the first Indian to convert (they'd also tell you to use her Christian name: Rebecca Rolfe). After converting, Rebecca made a triumphant voyage to England, which was marred only by an incurable disease that killed her stone dead at the age of 21.



From left: Pocahontas, Jessica, Joan

KINKY HOT DEVOUT CHRISTIAN THERESA BERKLEY

Theresa was a nineteenth-century brothel keeper from London who invented a "flogging machine" that earned her a fortune. So far very hot, not terribly Christian. Theresa changed all that when she left her estate to her brother, a missionary. He discovered the source of the money and refused it, but it was a nice gesture.

SLUTTY HOT DEVOUT CHRISTIAN JESSICA HAHN

In the mid-'80s, Jessica was a young, pious Christian woman who toiled as a secretary at PTL (Praise the Lord) Ministries. When millionaire PTL televangelist Jim Bakker invited her to his hotel room ... who was she to argue with a man of God? The

ensuing scandal decimated Bakker's PTL empire. Branded a whore by the Christian right, Jessica restored her reputation by getting breast implants, posing for *Playboy* and writhing in Sam Kinison's "Wild



Jessica Hahn goes nude.

Thing" video. SEAN CUNNINGHAM

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PLUG
YOUR EARS!
IT'S ...

THE 50 WORST ARTISTS IN MUSIC HISTORY

→ Extended drum solos. Prog-rock concept albums. Kenny G. We endured all these — and much worse! — to bring you *Blender's* list of the 50 most talentless music acts of all time. Just please don't ask us to do it again. *Ever*. . .

WRITTEN BY JOHN AIZLEWOOD, CLARK COLLIS, J.D. CONSIDINE, JOHN HARRIS, HOWARD JOHNSON, ROB KEMP, DANIEL KRAUSS, MAT SNOW AND JONAH WEINER
EDITED BY JOHN AIZLEWOOD

50 IRON BUTTERFLY

Everything bad about the '60s, in one easy-to-avoid package

Legend has it that this Los Angeles acid-rock quintet had consumed such massive amounts of marijuana during the 1968 sessions for "In the Garden of Eden" that keyboardist-singer Doug Ingle could only mumble the title. Hence, "In-a-Gadda-da-Vida" was born, and its unexpurgated 17-minute version (including a two-and-a-half-minute drum solo) inaugurated the dubious era of free-form FM radio.

Appalling fact *In-a-Gadda-da-Vida* was the first LP ever to be certified platinum.

Worst CD *Sun and Steel* (MCA, 1975)

49 TOAD THE WET SPROCKET

Very poor name. Even poorer band

"We were together longer than we ever thought we'd be," said Toad the Wet Sprocket singer Glenn Phillips when the band gave up in 1998. Longer than the rest of us had hoped, too. But the California four-piece defied the odds for 12 years, even piercing the Top 40 with their R.E.M. readymades.

Appalling fact Toad decided to have another go this year, playing dates with Counting Crows. *Run*.

Worst CD *Pale* (Columbia, 1990)

48 MASTER P

The dumbest of the Dirty South

In the late '90s, rapper and label head Percy Miller copycatted G-funk, simplified it and launched a fleet of indistinguishable MCs wrapped in cheap-looking, jewel-riddled artwork. P's worst offense was his solo work (his obnoxious breakout single, "Make Em Say Ugh," consisted of little more than a repeated groan). Like a crawfish-suckin' P. Diddy, he has, shockingly, earned millions from his No Limit imprint, which includes a clothing line, a publishing house — and even a phone company.

Appalling fact Master P had a Ferrari custom-painted in a Gucci-logo pattern.

Worst CD *Only God Can Judge Me* (No Limit, 1999)

Even under hypnosis, Master P still sucks.



46 THE SPIN DOCTORS

Beards. Extended "jams." Oh dear, oh dear

For a brief time (between 1992 and 1996), it seemed that any workaday bar band, if it was willing to gamely trek around the country for at least three years, had a chance at superstardom (cf. Hootie and the Blowfish, Blues Traveler). Blame the Spin Doctors, hairy New Yorkers who — thanks to the supremely annoying "Little Miss Can't Be Wrong" and "Two Princes" — momentarily opened a route between dive bars and the *Billboard* charts.

Appalling fact The Doctors got together while they were students at New York's New School of Jazz.

Worst CD *Homebelly Groove Live* (Epic, 1992)

45 GIPSY KINGS

The curse of many a late-'80s dinner party

Having grown up on the French-Spanish border, the six cousins who formed Gipsy Kings craftily aspired to sell their mixture of flamenco, Eurotrash pop and questionable hairdos to a world desperate for something seemingly exotic. They seduced the über-rich at St. Tropez before hitching their wagon to the then-huge world-music boom, diluting the flamenco with drums, bass and even synthesizers. Soon, they became the Muzak in every bistro in the free world.

Appalling fact Well-known groover George H.W. Bush was so fond of the Gipsy Kings that he asked them to perform at his inaugural presidential ball. For some reason, they declined.

Worst CD *Este Mundo* (Elektra, 1991) →

**47
GOO GOO DOLLS**
Mediocre band, woeful balladeers
Buffalo, New York's Goo Goo Dolls are former garage-rockers who, since their 1995 acoustic hit "Name," have successfully flogged a pallid brand of Bon Jovi-lite "rock." "Iris," their smash 1998 weepie, gives power ballads a bad name.
Worst CD
Gutterflower (Warner Bros., 2002)

Manowar: "Does this studded jockstrap make me look fat?"

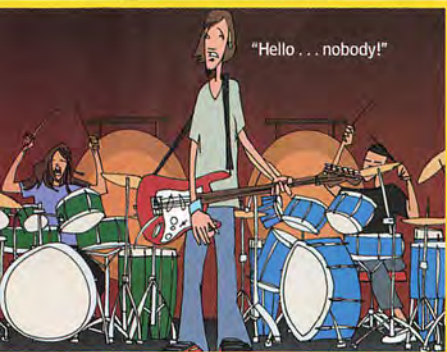


44 MANOWAR

None more metal. None more gay

An American answer to Judas Priest and Iron Maiden, Rochester, New York's Manowar embody every conceivable heavy-metal cliché: Bodybuilders all, the four wear leather and animal pelts onstage; singer Eric Adams shrieks only of death, warfare and the glory of metal; Joey DeMaio performs solo bass renditions of "The Flight of the Bumblebee." They're quite possibly the most ludicrous people in rock & roll history.

Appalling fact In 1993, Russian youth voted Manowar above the Beatles and Michael Jackson as the act they would most like to see perform live.
Worst CD *Sign of the Hammer* (EMI, 1985)



ARE YOU IN THE WORST BAND IN THE WORLD?

Take this simple multiple-choice quiz and save yourself some embarrassment!

- How long is your drummer's solo?**
 - He doesn't get one.
 - A couple minutes is all, and it's very funky.
 - Which of our drummers are you talking about?
- What is the secret of your success?**
 - Inspiration.
 - Perspiration.
 - Butchering old soul classics in a manner beloved by middle-aged housewives and the mentally unwell.
- How many times has your band's lineup changed?**
 - Never happened, dude. If anyone left, it just wouldn't be the same.
 - A few. It's so hard to find a good accordionist.
 - 1,179.
- The name of your band is...**
 - A favorite phrase from a William S. Burroughs novel.
 - An action verb, followed by an even number.
 - Indistinguishable from that of an accounting firm.
- What is your favorite subject matter for lyrics?**
 - The pain of loving.
 - The joy of drinking.
 - Dragons. Or dungeons. But mostly dragons.



43 MIKE & THE MECHANICS

"Every generation blames the one before," they sang. So we will

While Phil Collins was torturing the world with his archetypal '80s soft-rock, his Genesis colleague Mike Rutherford unwisely decided to join in. Ergo the Mechanics, a trio built around Rutherford, former Squeeze vocalist-keyboardist Paul Carrack and the late Paul Young. As shown by the 1989 number 1 hit "The Living Years," an unbearably sentimental ode to Rutherford's deceased father, they made Collins sound like the MC5.

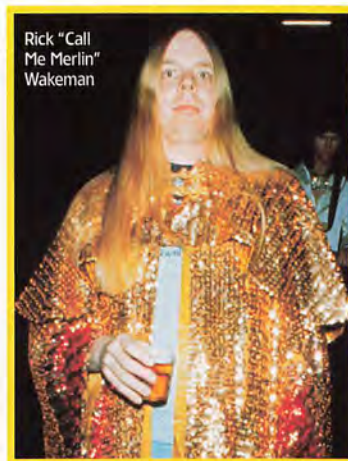
Appalling fact Against significant odds, there is a U.K.-based Mike & the Mechanics tribute band, the Living Years.

Worst CD *Beggar on a Beach of Gold* (Virgin, 1995)

42 RICK WAKEMAN

Can play two synthesizers at once — but nothing that people want to hear

Keyboard "wizard" and professional cape wearer Wakeman's diabolical taste revealed itself early, when he elected to



Rick "Call Me Merlin" Wakeman



41 WHITESNAKE

Dumb and dumberer

Led by ex-Deep Purple frontman David Coverdale, Whitesnake's '80s success with their karaoke Led Zeppelin routine can be explained only by the public's enduring love for the double entendre, as exemplified on such songs as "Slide It In," "Slow Poke Music" and "Spit It Out." **Worst CD** *Slip of the Tongue* (Geffen, 1989)

40 BLIND MELON

A video made them; heroin undid them

Led by Axl Rose's mewling, drug-plagued pal Shannon Hoon, Blind Melon's lightweight rock would have been forgotten completely were it not for the boundless charm of "Bee Girl" Heather DeLoach, whose hoofing in the video for "No Rain" made the tune the band's lone hit. **Worst CD** *Soup* (Capitol, 1995)



Bob Geldof: "Did I ever mention I saved the world?"

join prog-rockers Yes instead of David Bowie's backing band, the Spiders From Mars. Not content with contributing to Yes's inexcusably pompous albums, he also spent the mid-'70s releasing a series of baroquely awful solo theme records, including *The Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*. For reasons that are still unclear, he opted to perform that one on ice.

Appalling fact While playing Yes songs live, Wakeman would wolf down curry during sections in which he had little to do. **Worst CD** *Lisztomania* (A&M, 1975)

39 BOB GELDOF

Should have stuck to saving the planet

He organized the Live Aid concerts, but "Saint" Bob Geldof is a less-than-godlike musical talent. In 1989, he released *The Vegetarians of Love*, a terrible quasi-Cajun album that was recorded in five days — and sounded like it. Thirteen years later came *Sex, Age & Death*, effectively a midlife crisis — replete with achingly embarrassing claims of undiminished sexual potency — set to music. Like most of his solo work, it stiffed.

Appalling fact One recent Geldof song, "10:15," features the line "She told me I was beautiful/And I made her come a lot." **Worst CD** *Sex, Age & Death* (Koch, 2002)

38 NELSON

Not even a traumatic Hollywood childhood could make this duo interesting

Identical twin sons of '50s rocker Rick Nelson, Matthew and Gunnar Nelson grew up in a broken home and were as famous for their Nordic good looks as for their formulaic pop-metal, which placed them in the Top 10. After grunge made such fare obsolete, they retreated, like all pop hacks, to Nashville.

Appalling fact Had their father not kicked them off his plane, Matthew and Gunnar would have perished in the crash that killed him.

Worst CD *Because They Can* (Geffen, 1995)

There's something funny about those Nelson broods.



IF YOU ANSWERED...

Mostly a): Congratulations! You're in a good band.

Mostly b): Commiserations! You're in a not-very-good band.

Mostly c): What's that sucking sound? Oh, it's you.

CLARK COLLIS



"Any requests?" Stop!

David Tazzyman (illustration); Larry Busacca/Reina Ltd. (Boston); Philip Gould/Corbis (accordionist); G. Haneke/Corbis (Wakeman); Ross Hall/Idolots (Whitesnake); Nelson; Adrian Booth/Reina Ltd. (Geldof)

37 THE DOORS

He was the Lizard King. No, really...

While in college, many young men still choose to immerse themselves in such ill-advised subjects as Nietzsche, black magic and Native American folklore. Most get over it; Jim Morrison, unfortunately, inflicted his terminally adolescent views on the wider world. The consequences included overblown screeds of nonsense such as "The End" and "The Crystal Ship," plus, effectively, the invention of goth. Then he got fat and died.

Appalling fact Morrison is widely believed to have suffered his fatal heart attack while masturbating in the bathtub.

Worst CD *The Soft Parade* (Elektra, 1969)

36 98 DEGREES

Well, their mothers must love them

"I never forget a face, but in your case I'll make an exception," quipped Groucho Marx. He'd have been hard-pressed to remember this utterly unremarkable Ohio boy band, though he would have loved to have forgotten their music. Harmonies, schmaltzy urban soul and even more saccharine life philosophy ("Persevere, work hard, have faith and eventually you'll reach your goal") paid dividends in the late '90s, as third-rate cheese such as "I Do (Cherish You)" and "Because of You" somehow became big hits.

Appalling fact Buy the 98 Degrees official board game — and find out which band member once autographed a diaper!

Worst CD *This Christmas* (Uptown/Universal, 1999)

35 PAUL OAKENFOLD

Hey, Mr. DJ: Keep your day job!

As a remixer of note, "Oakley" is lauded for turning the guitar-loving masses into Ecstasy-aware, sodden-shirted neophytes of '90s dance music. But 2002's *Bunkka*, the Englishman's first album of original material, was an abject exercise in marketing, not music. Ham-fisted and clichéd, lacking direction and sparkle, nothing Oakenfold created himself would have inspired any DJs worth a lick. Dreadful.

Appalling fact Perry Farrell, Tricky, Ice Cube and Nelly Furtado all lined up to contribute to *Bunkka*. Presumably without hearing the music first.

Worst CD *Bunkka* (Maverick/Warner Bros., 2002)

34 LIVE

These U2 sound-alikes never did find what they were looking for

Blessed with the same spiritual longing as U2 — but, sadly, none of the musical cunning — this Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, quartet made a brief but insignificant splash in the early '90s as purveyors of grandiose, vaguely uplifting alt-rock.

98 Degrees kick off their weekly band cull.



Although their hold on the mainstream had evaporated by the end of the decade, their blend of loud guitars and portentous lyrics helped pave the way for crypto-Christian rockers Creed. Nice one, Live.

Appalling fact The album title *Secret Samadhi* derives from a form of Hindu meditation.

Worst CD *Secret Samadhi* (MCA, 1997)

33 JAPAN

An uncontestable argument against the '80s

Japan formed in 1974 and soon discovered that their mixture of washed-out glam-rock, vaguely literary pretensions and bucketloads of makeup prompted little more than cruel laughter. The dawn of the '80s, however, found things



Japan's David Sylvian: No autographs, please.

32 THE HOOTERS

The great folk-rock scare

Philadelphians Rob Hyman and Eric Bazilian assembled a quintet that specialized in a vile blend of folk-rock and New Wave, in the process proving that the mandolin is more irritating than the synthesizer.

Worst CD *Zig Zag* (Columbia, 1989)

31 ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

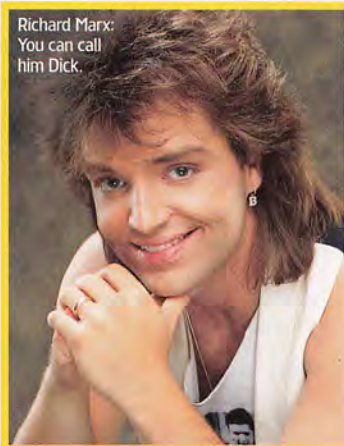
Too positive for their own good

Their 1992 debut, *3 Years, 5 Months & 2 Days in the Life Of...*, sold 5 million copies despite containing some of the preachiest, most contrived "wisdom" ever laid down. Their studio follow-up, *Zingalamundi*, sank without a trace.

Worst CD *Unplugged* (Chrysalis, 1993)



Richard Marx: You can call him Dick.



moving their way, and by 1981, plenty of easily distracted teens were wobbling enigmatically to "Voices Raised in Welcome, Hands Held in Prayer," "The Art of Parties" and "Still Life in Mobile Homes" (the titles say it all).

Appalling fact Their version of Smokey Robinson & the Miracles' "I Second That Emotion" might be the worst Motown cover of all time.

Worst CD *Gentlemen Take Polaroids* (Virgin, 1980)

30 RICHARD MARX

The devil-king of MOR

When it comes to the dreaded genre of adult contemporary, few were as archetypal as Winnetka, Illinois-born Richard Marx. The unbearably syrupy "Right Here →



ACTORS' HORRIBLE BANDS!

A special circle of musical hell is surely reserved for these talented thespians turned tone-deaf musicians

KEANU REEVES

In *The Matrix*, he is "The One." But in his crappy garage trio, Dogstar, he was merely the one who played bass — not very well.

JARED LETO

First rule of the *Fight Club* star's group Thirty Seconds to Mars? Never listen to them. Second rule of the *Fight Club* star's group Thirty Seconds to Mars? Never listen to them.

DON JOHNSON



Not content with pioneering crucial rolled-up-sleeves technology, the *Miami Vice* star and onetime lyricist for the Allman Brothers scored a miraculous Top 5 hit in 1986 with the limp AOR ballad "Heartbeat."

RUSSELL CROWE

Remarkably, the Oscar-winning actor's bar band, Thirty Odd Foot of Grunts, manages to be even worse than his name.

JOHN TRAVOLTA

Not just a huge film star in the late '70s but a huge pop star, too — thanks to *Grease* and such saccharine teeth-graters as "Whenever I'm Away From You" and "All Strung Out on You."

BILLY BOB THORNTON

The tragically poor country noodlings on 2001's *Private Radio* meant that the *Armageddon* star's rock ambitions lasted even less time than did his marriage to Angelina Jolie.

BRUCE WILLIS

Some people posit that Willis's artistic nadir was his box-office bomb *Hudson Hawk*. Those people have clearly not heard his 1987 album, *The Return of Bruno*. Lucky bastards. CLARK COLLIS



Waiting," from 1989, remains his most far-reaching hit, but it shows the extent to which America fell for his combination of mullet, *Wedding Singer* apparel and softer-than-soft rock that it was his third consecutive number 1 single.

Appalling fact Before his brief burst of stardom, Marx honed his painfully bland art as a backing singer for Lionel Richie. **Worst CD** *Repeat Offender* (Capitol, 1989)

29 SKINNY PUPPY

The audience rarely sang along to "Dogshit"

And so it came to pass in the 1980s that two Canadian Kevins changed their names to cEvin and Nivek in order to make themselves more interesting, hired a singer named Dwayne (who would die of a heroin overdose) and spent almost a decade making ear-torturing industrial music. The sound of whiny students on drugs sampling Timothy Leary — as scary as Mannheim Steamroller.

Appalling fact On the *Head Trauma* tour, cEvin sliced open his stomach with broken glass and performed a vivisection. Relax, everyone — he was only pretending.

Worst CD *Too Dark Park* (Nettwerk, 1990)

28 CRASH TEST DUMMIES

They said Brad Roberts's voice was so deep it could be heard only by whales. Not true, sadly

If you want to be recognized as serious recording artists with a whimsical, folksy bent, it's probably best not to notch your only hit with a daft novelty song based around the world's silliest lead vocal and title it "Mmm, Mmm, Mmm, Mmm." The remainder of *God Shuffled His Feet*, this Canadian band's second album, was much worse. They released *I Don't Care That You Don't Mind* in 2001. No one cared.

Appalling fact They're Canadian.

Worst CD *A Worm's Life* (Arista, 1996)

27 COLOR ME BADD

These Oklahomans sang about sex. But they couldn't keep it up

Oklahoma City's gain was New York's loss when these four high-school friends left their hometown and headed east in search of fame. They found it in 1991 with the double-platinum single "I Wanna Sex You Up," a literally unbelievable slice of lasciviousness from such inoffensive boys. Diluted hit followed diluted hit, but three watery albums later, CMB suddenly found themselves all washed up.

Appalling fact As kids, CMB regularly buttonholed such touring acts as Huey Lewis & the News and Bon Jovi for impromptu a cappella auditions.

Worst CD *Now & Forever* (Giant, 1996)

26 CÉLINE DION

One more reason to hate the French?

Seemingly hellbent from birth on proving that Michael Bolton isn't the cheesiest



25 JAMIROQUAI

The white, talentless Stevie Wonder

Where to start — the ludicrous headgear? The atrocious dancing? No, let us start, and finish, with the fact that Stevie Wonder has more talent in his dark glasses than Jay Kay has in his entire body.

Worst CD *A Funk Odyssey* (Epic, 2001)

24 BAD ENGLISH

With ex-members of Journey!

Suck-cheeked soft-rock John Waite had scored big in 1984 with the ballad "Missing You." But with his solo career stalling, and half of Journey toilet-bound without a singer, they forged an unholy late-'80s alliance. Bad English retailed puffed-up power ballads, while Waite cast himself as a doomed romantic hero.

Worst CD *Backlash* (Epic, 1991)



Céline Dion: What's wrong with this picture? Everything!

balladeer on the face of the planet, the French-Canadian singer first secured a manager at age 12 — creepily, she later married him. But far more terrifying is her endless string of shrieking über-hits, particularly the *Titanic* theme, "My Heart Will Go On" — which, if it had been played on the ship itself, would surely have made passengers leap to their doom long before the iceberg did its dastardly deed.

Appalling fact You might want to stay clear of Nevada until 2006: Dion recently began a three-year engagement at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas.

Worst CD *Céline Dion* (Epic, 1992)

23 CREED

Whoever said the devil has all the best tunes was probably listening to Creed at the time

It's doubtful there's a more irritating sight in videodom than Creed's Scott Stapp pulling one of his crucifixion poses while a wind machine blows his hair in the appropriate direction. But the Florida group's real crime is its music, an overblown distillation of grunge's most obviously commercial elements every inch as vapid

Creed await delivery of air conditioner.



Celine Dion/Camera Press/Retna Ltd. (Reeves), John Baisom/Retna.co.uk (Jamiroquai), George Bonshilos (Dion), John McNamee/Retna (Creed)

as the music Nirvana and company were rebelling against.

Appalling fact This April, a fan sued the band following a show at which, it was alleged, Stapp was so incapacitated he was "unable to sing a single song."

Worst CD *Weathered* (Wind-Up, 2001)

22 PRIMUS

"Care for some prog-rock with cartoon-character vocals on the side?" "No, thanks!"

Perhaps the most tune-free act ever to chart an album in the Top 10 (*Pork Soda* hit number 7 in 1993), Oakland, California's Primus were led by Les Claypool, a bass virtuoso and startlingly nasal vocalist. Musicians and the terminally nerdy gaped in wide wonder at the trio's prodigious instrumental "chops"; everyone else was repulsed by the band's combination of the worst aspects of Frank Zappa and Rush.

Appalling fact The rallying cry for Primus's misguided fans was "Primus sucks!" — intended as sarcasm yet all too true.

Worst CD *Pork Soda* (Interscope, 1993)

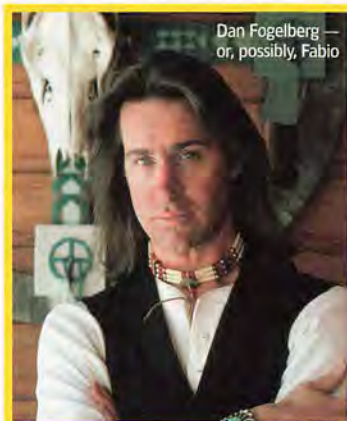
21 THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT

The sound inside the head of Pink Floyd's engineer. Zzzzzzz...

Having conquered the *Dark Side of the Moon*, EMI Records' bearded staff engineer Alan Parsons decided that what the universe *really* needed was a prog-rock concept album based on the work of nineteenth-century horror novelist Edgar Allan Poe, narrated by Orson Welles. It didn't, of course, but an undeterred Parsons soldiered on, swapping prog-rock for vapid AOR in the '80s. Finally bundled off to play guitar in Ringo Starr's backing band, he was never seen again.

Appalling fact In the '90s, the world-champion Chicago Bulls took the court to the pretentious swells of Parsons's "Sirius."

Worst CD *Pyramid* (Arista, 1978)



19 DAN FOGELBERG

Giving male sensitivity a bad name — one song at a time

A graduate of the coffeehouse circuit around the University of Illinois, Fogelberg came to epitomize the most emetic qualities of the '70s singer-songwriter: the high, quavering voice, the knee-jerk sentimentality, the earnestly strummed acoustic guitar. He was blessed with a gift for vacuously pretty melodies, and his work also anticipated the vapidness of New Age music — although with the added annoyance of bad lyrics.

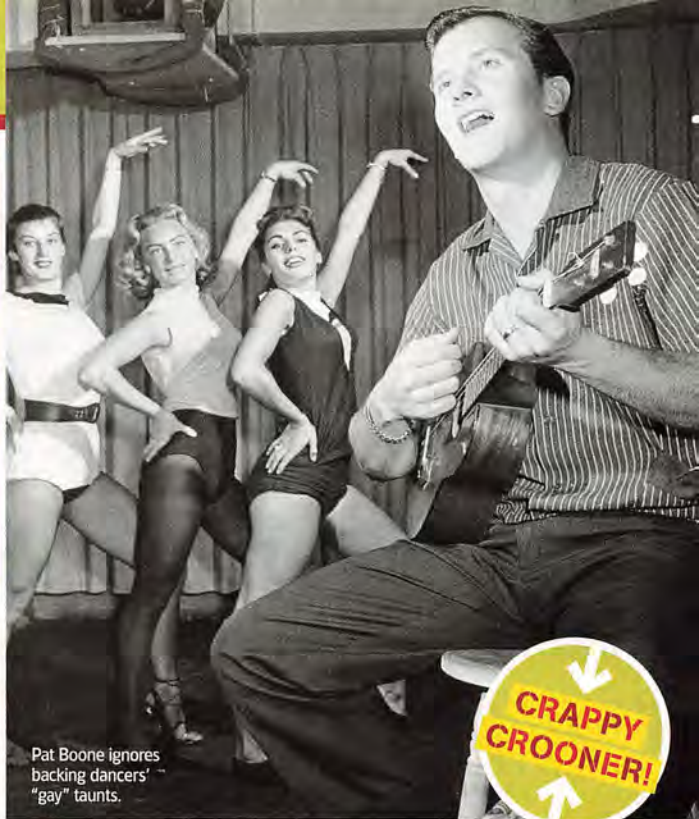
Appalling fact His 1982 hit "Run for the Roses" smelled of horse manure, and it was in fact about the Kentucky Derby.

Worst CD *Twin Sons of Different Mothers* (with Tim Weisberg) (Full Moon/Epic, 1978)

18 PAT BOONE

With his clean white bucks, he made rock & roll safe for '50s nerds

Back before blue-eyed soul, Pat Boone made a career out of watering down '50s R&B hits. Appealing to an audience who considered "race music" to be almost as bad as interracial dating, he had enormous



17 BENZINO

He rapped, he co-owned

As silent co-owner of the hip-hop magazine *The Source*, Benzino embarrassingly ordered extensive feature coverage of his 2001 debut album, *The Benzino Project*, in the pages of his periodical. It didn't work: The album sold fewer than 75,000 copies. **Worst CD** *The Benzino Project* (Motown, 2001)

16 QINGO BOINGO

Artless art-rock

Qingo Boingo singer Danny Elfman went on to become one of Hollywood's most in-demand soundtrack composers. But during his first go-round, he and his movie-director brother led this ostentatiously orchestrated L.A. New Wave group that began its pretentious career, not surprisingly, as a performance-art troupe. **Worst CD** *Only a Lad* (A&M, 1981)

success in making Fats Domino seem boring and Little Richard straight. After he spent the '80s as a spokesperson for Christian conservatism, his album *In a Metal Mood* cursed heavy metal by treating it like big-band schlock.

Appalling fact In 1977, his daughter Debbie topped the charts with "You Light Up My Life."

Worst CD *In a Metal Mood* (Hip-O, 1997)

15 YANNI

Fabio meets Tesh!

As a member of the Greek national swimming team, 14-year-old Yanni Chryssomallis broke his country's national freestyle record. But instead of bringing further glory to his homeland by going to the Olympics, he emigrated to the U.S. in 1972 and began his 30-year quest to offer wretched New Age twaddle to legions of Midwestern matrons, spa proprietors, insomniacs and his former paramour Linda Evans. Swimming's loss is music's loss.

Appalling fact "I avoid words. If instrumental music is done properly, it bypasses logic, programming and society. It becomes primal. I compose by emotion."

Worst CD *Yanni Live at the Acropolis* (Private Music, 1993)

14 YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

Big on solos, short on songs

With his passion for the music of Deep Purple's Ritchie Blackmore, Swedish guitar show-off Yngwie Malmsteen co-opted his hero's deadpan demeanor, neoclassical solos and frilly cuffs, garnering kudos from '80s bedroom guitar onanists for his playing speed. Yet Malmsteen never employed a proper songwriter, and his noodling hard rock — sometimes augmented by a full

20 HOWARD JONES

He came from England. Thanks, England

In the mid-'80s, it was difficult to avoid synth-wielding Brits. The sprig-haired, perma-grinning Howard Jones was the most irritating, seemingly convinced that he had something very important to tell the world — his 1984 debut was grandly titled *Human's Lib* — but unclear exactly what it was.

Appalling fact Early in his career, Jones was accompanied by "improvisational dance" expert Jed Hoile, who, in keeping with the lyrics to "New Song," mimed throwing off his "mental chains."

Worst CD *Live Acoustic America* (Plump, 1996)



Mick Jagger:
Outfit better
than solo
records



orchestra — has scored increasingly minuscule returns.

Appalling fact Malmsteen's 1983 show at London's Marquee club sold out in minutes because of unsuspecting Bruce Springsteen fans who thought they were attending a secret gig by the Boss.

Worst CD *Concerto for Electric Guitar and Orchestra* (Ranch Life, 1999)

13 MICK JAGGER

Even Bill Wyman laughs at Mick's solo records

Given the roll call of A-list rockers who have appeared on the Stones frontman's four solo ventures, even a tone-deaf 6-year-old could have produced something you'd want to hear twice, or at least once. Alas, it seems, there's never a tone-deaf 6-year-old around when you need one. Even on 1993's not-entirely-grim *Wandering Spirit*, produced by Rick Rubin, Jagger does his damndest to ruin things by inexplicably singing a sea shanty. That's right — a sea shanty!

Appalling fact In his native U.K., Jagger's latest solo release, *Goddess in the Doorway*, sold just 954 copies on its first day of release.

Worst CD *Goddess in the Doorway* (Virgin, 2001)

12 TIN MACHINE

David Bowie's darkest (non-acting) hour

In 1989, having presumably become bored with excelling at pop, glam-rock and funk, chameleon David Bowie decided to demonstrate that he too could be really, really bad. The vehicle for this unlikely ambition was the plodding rock four-piece Tin Machine, whose two critically mauled studio albums and one "hilariously" titled live document (*Oy Vey, Baby*) found Bowie voluntarily subsuming his genius beneath chorus-free tunes and guitarist Reeves Gabrels's habit of playing his instrument with a vibrator.

Appalling fact The band's roadies wore T-shirts that read FUCK YOU, I LIKE TIN MACHINE. They were the only ones.

Worst CD *Oy Vey, Baby* (Victory, 1991)



11 LATOYA JACKSON

The least talented Jackson

Her voice may be thinner than Janet's and her charisma dimmer than Tito's, but her eyebrows uncannily resembled Michael's, and for a short, confusing time in the '80s, that was enough to earn Latoya Jackson a record deal. Typically, it was her private life rather than her hapless music that gained the most attention, after she accused her father of sexual abuse.

Worst CD *From Nashville to You* (Mar-Gor, 1994)



Lee Greenwood

10 AIR SUPPLY

The sound of eunuchs sobbing

Disproving the theory that lightning never strikes twice in the same place, Air Supply contained not one but two mewling, lovesick softies whose name was Russell. In the early '80s, the Australian duo's gutless ballads — music so remorselessly fey it made Journey sound like Danzig — sent a generation of jilted lovers toppling into depression that was as clinical as the Russells' music. Mercifully, though, by the end of the decade, the pair had cried themselves to sleep.

Appalling fact Determined to ruin the festive season, Air Supply once recorded a Christmas album.

Worst CD *The Christmas Album* (Arista, 1987)

9 LEE GREENWOOD

Gives patriotism a bad name

"Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel!" Samuel Johnson said, but in Lee Greenwood's case, it's the ultimate meal ticket for a Nashville hack. A bland balladeer with a weakness for overwrought sentimentality, he wrote the 1984 tune "God Bless the U.S.A." in response to the Soviet downing of a South Korean airliner. It became a campaign theme for George



Asia show how to embarrass an entire continent

H.W. Bush and was recently excavated in torturous fashion by the *American Idol 2* cast during the war in Iraq.

Appalling fact Greenwood performed a duet with Latoya Jackson on her dreadful 1994 album, *From Nashville to You*.

Worst CD *You've Got a Good Love Comin'* (MCA, 1985)

8 VANILLA ICE

The white boy to end all white boys

You know that yearbook photograph you won't let anyone see? The one whose very existence keeps you awake shaking at night? Imagine it was a horribly dated number 1 single from 1990 called "Ice Ice Baby," and you have an idea what life is like for Robert Van Winkle. It doesn't stop there: Ice starred in the abysmal 1991 Hollywood vehicle *Cool as Ice*, and after squandering his quick fortune, mounted an unsuccessful comeback in 1998 as (shudder) a rap-rocker.

Appalling fact Widely denounced by hip-hop fans as a phony, Ice rebuffed his detractors at the 1991 American Music Awards: "Kiss my white ass!"

Worst CD *Hard to Swallow* (Republic, 1998)

7 ASIA

Ridiculous album sleeves, virtuoso playing, soulless rock. It can be only one band

Asia's music turned out to be exactly the sum of its parts: former technicians from King Crimson, Emerson, Lake & Palmer and Yes who got together with an erstwhile Buggie at the start of the '80s. It promised the most self-important prog-rock melded with the limp-wristed worst of AOR, and it delivered. The band's self-titled debut sold more than 4 million copies, which only encouraged them.

Appalling fact To this day, keyboardist Geoff Downes is happy to offer Asia's mission statement: "To play music that is panoramic, symphonic and rock at the same time."

Worst CD *Astra* (Geffen, 1985)



Vanilla Ice wants you... to lend him a quarter.

6 KANSAS

Beware all bands named after states or continents!

Their folksy 1977 hit "Dust in the Wind," a tractor-size fiddle player and a guitarist in bib overalls suggested pioneer-spirited rural rockers. The truth was far more sinister. Bereft of sex and emotion, Kansas's music was a noxious fusion of Jethro Tull and Yes, appealing only to male sci-fi bores and guaranteed to drive any self-respecting frontiersman headlong into the nearest bear trap.

Appalling fact A feature of their live shows was roadie T. Rat, who would come onstage in a trench coat, top hat and clown mask. Then he would disrobe and dance butt-naked.

Worst CD *Point of Know Return* (Columbia, 1977)

5 STARSHIP

They built this city on rock & roll. And crap!

In 1985, Starship rose like a phoenix from the ashes of once-mighty psychedelic overlords Jefferson Airplane/Starship — but only if, by phoenix, you mean "ultralame, MTV-pandering purveyors of MOR schlock." Best remembered for "We Built This City," they were also responsible for unleashing the Diane Warren-penned "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now," a song bad enough to appear on the soundtrack of the diabolical Andrew McCarthy "comedy" *Mannequin*. And its sequel!

Appalling fact Singer Grace Slick later disavowed "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now," claiming in an interview, "I know damn well



Michael Bolton:
That had better be
soap bubbles.

how fast a relationship can fall apart"
Worst CD *Love Among the Cannibals* (RCA, 1989)

4 KENNY G

This guy really blows!

Hated equally by jazz and rock fans, Kenny Gorelick's limpid instrumentals and obsequious cameos helped turn the soprano sax solo into pop music's most feared cliché. He started his career with fusion hack Jeff Lorber, and his 1986 album, *Duotones*, established a steady market for anodyne, minimal background music, an aesthetic that reached its zenith in 1997 when "The G" set a world record by holding a single note for 45 minutes.

Appalling fact He graduated magna cum laude from the University of Washington with a degree in accounting.

Worst CD *Classics in the Key of G* (Arista, 1999)



Kenny G



Emerson, Lake & Palmer: Were they
all blind?

3 MICHAEL BOLTON

Otis Redding died for this?

With his curly locks and toned abs, Michael Bolton looked like nothing so much as the hero of a cheap bodice-ripper, which was enough to earn him a fervent audience for his over-emoted late-'80s power ballads. Unfortunately, his greatest desire was to sing R&B oldies, which he went through like Sherman through Georgia.

Appalling fact After losing a plagiarism suit to the Isley Brothers, Bolton tried to avoid paying them royalties by buying their publishing house.

Worst CD *Timeless: The Classics* (Columbia, 1992)

2

EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER

Welcome back, my friends, to the second-worst band in history!

"Boasting" former members of the Nice, King Crimson and — yes! — Atomic Rooster, the less-than-super '70s supergroup ELP shunned blues-based rock in favor of bombastically reinterpreted classical works — with bewilderingly successful results. A nightmarish enough proposition on record, the Brit trio's live shows were peppered by interminable solo spots, including a 20-minute drum workout by Carl Palmer that ended with him ringing a cowbell held between his teeth.

Appalling fact Singer-bassist Greg Lake performed on a \$10,000 Persian rug that roadies vacuumed before every show.

Worst CD *Love Beach* (Rhino, 1978)

1

THE
WORST BAND
EVER!

INSANE CLOWN POSSE

They sound even stupider than they look

Two trailer-trash types who wear face paint, pretend to be a street gang and drench cult devotees in cheap soda called Faygo, Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope are more notorious for their beef with Eminem (who pistol-whipped an ICP homey in 2001) than their ham-fisted rap-rock music. They claim that a "dark carnival" visited them one night, prophesied impending apocalypse and made them its messengers. Between this circus gospel, they find plenty of time to rap about 40-ouncers and venereal disease.

Appalling fact While appearing on *The Howard Stern Show* in 1999, Shaggy 2 Dope told Sharon Osbourne to "buff my pickle." She declined.

Worst CD *The Wraith: Shangri-La* (D3, 2002)



The Zagat review
really didn't do
the place justice.

"I Want to Buy a Huge Porn Collection!"



➔ What will **Junior Senior**, Denmark's biggest pop stars, buy with almost a thousand bucks of *Blender*'s cash? Why, vintage erotica, booze and 200 hot dogs, of course!

BY CLARK COLLIS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SILVIA OTTE



"THIS MAN IS using a fish skin as a condom," announces Jesper Mortensen, the "Junior" half of Danish dance-rock duo Junior Senior. "That's . . . kind of disgusting."

Yes, it is. Mercifully, the gentleman and his piscine prophylactic are merely images being screened on a wall of New York's Museum of Sex. Junior and his musical partner, Jeppe "Senior" Laursen, have come here to dispose of a portion of the \$848 *Blender* has given them to spend on whatever they want, as long as we can tag along for the ride.

"Woo-hoo!" yells a delighted Senior as, on a video screen, a porn starlet's face receives a generous coating of manly love juice. Soon, the band's portly frontman has gravitated to the gift shop's selection of vintage porn DVDs.

"I've got some money in the bank now," says the 27-year-old, a familiar face across Europe thanks to the massive success of Junior Senior's hit single "Move Your Feet." "And I want to buy a huge '70s porn collection."

A noble ambition, to be sure. But what confuses *Blender* is the fact that the videos he's perusing are mostly straight, while the glittery, visor-wearing Senior is, well, entirely gay.



From left:
Senior,
money, Junior

"I had to wipe old people's asses. It really makes you appreciate success."



"I just like the men in '70s porn," he explains, inspecting a copy of *Deep Throat*. "Porn is worse now, especially gay porn. They're missing the mustaches — they shave off everything they have. The men in these movies look really nice. I don't really care who they fuck."

If Senior's openness about his sexual preferences seems surprising, then you haven't heard Junior Senior's album, *D-D-Don't Stop the Beat*. A joyous fusion of Michael Jackson-esque hooks, B-52's-style party-happy quirkiness and get-up-and-dance Europop, the band's debut also makes much of the fact that while Junior likes girls, Senior prefers boys. Indeed, when they perform at New York's Knitting Factory 24 hours after their evening with *Blender*, Senior will cede the mic to guitarist Junior for "Boy Meets Girl." Because the song is about women, he announces, he won't be singing it.

As we leave the museum, however, the talk is not of sex but of that other life essential: food. Our excursion into the erotic has been just a warm-up for the

main course: the 200 hot dogs Junior Senior want to give away outside the Bowery Ballroom, where indie-rock duo the Raveonettes, fellow Danes, are playing a show tonight. But not just any hot dogs will do. Junior Senior need *Danish* hot dogs — whatever the hell they are.

"You've never had a Danish hot dog?" asks an amazed Junior, 26. "They're much better. The toppings are different. We have

mustard and ketchup, but also remoulade. It's a pickly thing — like mayonnaise with curry."

Right. Who doesn't like mayonnaise and curry on his hot dogs?

"In Sweden they put mashed potatoes and shrimp salad on them," counters Junior. "That's weird. I had it only once — when I was really drunk."

Junior seems hellbent on repeating that degree of inebriation when — after acquiring a vat of remoulade at the Danish hot dog restaurant F&B — we stop in at Remote, a bar where patrons can view other drinkers on personal TV screens and then give them a call. Unfortunately, Junior Senior's phones remain unring.

"In Denmark you can just look up famous people's numbers in the musician's union phone book," Junior says, making swift work of his large snakebite. "When we were drunk, we'd ring them and play our favorite music speeded up on the phone so it sounded like the Smurfs."

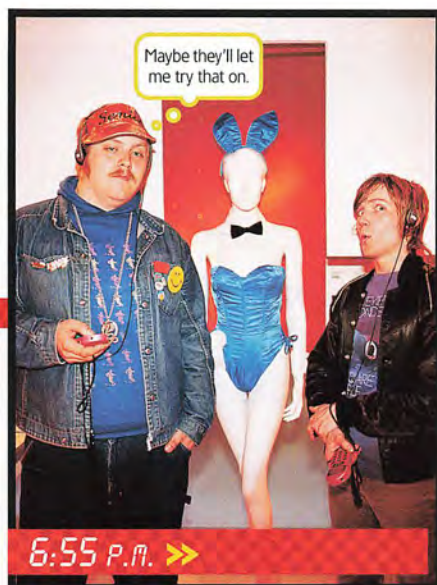
"We should get Gwyneth Paltrow's number," Senior muses.

Sadly, *Blender* has left Gwynnie's number in our other jacket. So we head to the Bowery Ballroom, where friendly but mildly bewildered hot dog vendors

SPEND OUR CASH!

- ➔ **THE BAND**
Junior Senior
- ➔ **THE MISSION**
To spend \$848 in one day any way they want
- ➔ **THE REASON**
Blender asked them to!





Mohammed, Mohammed and Hussan give our heroes, now sporting aprons, a quick briefing before handing over their cart, which Junior Senior have rented for the evening.

"It's always good to learn new things," says Senior, slathering a dog with remoulade. "I've worked as a postman, as a caregiver. I had to wipe old people's asses. It really makes you appreciate success a bit more."

Business, at first, is slow, a situation little helped by Senior, who lasciviously asks passersby whether they've "ever tried it Danish-style." After 10 minutes, they've managed to give away only a couple of hot dogs. Junior asks *Blender* if it would be possible to get a refund from the vendors to spend on beer and "a massage from a naughty lady."

But once the pair start yelling "Free hot dogs!" at the top of their lungs, a crowd begins to gather. Not only are the Raveonettes themselves here, but so are a number of Danes who are more than a little surprised to encounter their country's biggest pop stars dispensing free meat on a New York street corner. Even *Blender* — usually a strict mustard-and-ketchup-only type — has to admit that the remoulade does introduce an acceptable tanginess to the meat.

Alas, the fun comes to a premature end when a representative from the venue, concerned about potential problems with the police, asks the pair to desist. But Senior is content that they have completed their mission of "giving New York a taste of Denmark."

"And now," he announces, ambling toward the Bowery Ballroom's front door, "I think I will go and get drunk!" [BLENDER]



HOW THEY SPENT IT	
JUNIOR SENIOR	
New York	
June 21, 2003	
MUSEUM OF SEX	188.25
200 PORTIONS OF REMOULADE	125.90
DRINKS AT REMOTE	30.00
200 HOT DOGS AND CART RENTAL	500.00
TOTAL	844.15

Gimme Shelter

➔ As an emo icon, Chris Carrabba was able to let his songs do the talking. But no more. On the eve of becoming rock's next major star, the **Dashboard Confessional** frontman allows *Blender* a rare glimpse into his very private world. . . .

BY DORIAN LYNSEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT MAXWELL

✖ CHRIS CARRABBA HAS a moral dilemma. The 27-year-old Dashboard Confessional frontman lingers outside a Manhattan skate shop deciding whether to take the plunge. "My manager doesn't want me to skateboard in New York," he explains. "He thinks I'm going to get killed. So I promised him I wouldn't bring my skateboard to New York. But if I buy a new one, that doesn't count, right?"

Um, right. Carrabba steps inside and picks out a zippy model with a flying-V guitar decal. While the salesman assembles the board, Carrabba sidles up to *Blender* and says quietly, "The stupid thing is, I could probably get this skateboard for free — but I hate to ask." The thought makes him grimace.

Right now, Carrabba's career is at a tipping point. Companies want to give him free stuff, but he's too embarrassed to pursue it. Fans recognize him on the street, but the average MTV viewer doesn't. In short, he's a cult hero who's one record away from being a star.

A *Mark, A Mission, A Brand, A Scar*, his third album and the first to be released in conjunction with industry giant Interscope, looks to be that record. The title is a pocket-size précis of his career. "It was the mark I was trying to make and the mission I was on," he elaborates. "But suddenly I was a brand, which became a scar."

If this sounds portentous, consider Dashboard Confessional's growing pains so far. The group began as an acoustic side project when Carrabba was still in Florida emo-rockers Further Seems Forever, but the unapologetic emotional purges of Dashboard's lyrics quickly attracted a devoted following that far outstripped that of his day job.

Carrabba wrote the first two Dashboard Confessional albums, *Swiss Army Romance* and *The Places You Have Come to Fear the Most*, in 1999 in the

wake of a devastating breakup. He was quickly cast as emo's high priest of heartache, his shows famed for their intimate, cathartic intensity. During last year's MTV *Unplugged* set, the audience's fondness for singing along to every word almost drowned out Carrabba himself.

There are three other musicians in Dashboard Confessional (guitarist John Lefler, bassist Scott Schoenbeck and drummer Mike Marsh), but they're not the ones fans obsess over on message boards or line up after shows to meet. All the weight of expectation rests on the frontman's shoulders.

"Being a relatively private person despite the way I write songs, I have major reservations about my life becoming public property," he ponders. "I recognize that people want a lot of me, and I just have to say, 'This is how much you're going to get,' and stick to that. I can tell you a lot about me in my songs, but I can't tell you everything — and I'm not going to."

But if Dashboard Confessional go supernova, will he have a choice?

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ALTHOUGH CARRABBA'S appeal is primarily musical, it can't be denied that he looks the part. He's tautly built and matinee-idol handsome, with parallel Japanese tattoos snaking up both arms. His T-shirt today features a smiling

Buddha and says FOR GOOD LUCK RUB MY TUMMY, and he has the most fantastic sculpted hair, which resembles that of either James Dean or Luke Perry,

depending on your peer group.

The thing you notice most, though, is that he doesn't have an ounce of swagger. A man who suffers from stage fright and hates being the center of attention, he takes almost an hour to relax. Until then, he's a mess of wandering eyes and jittery hands, picking at a smoked-chicken salad and lemonade in a downtown bistro. ➔

"I don't like lies.
I beat myself up if I'm
inadvertently untruthful."

★



Coming soon: The Chris Carrabba *Umbrella Workout*.

Styling: Scott Knight for Artists by Timothy; Piano grooming: Elrai for Armintheagency.com



DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL

Though far from humorless, he's almost painfully sincere.

"I'm an honest person," he agrees. "I don't know if it's Freudian or not, but I don't like deception. I don't like lies. I beat myself up if I'm inadvertently untruthful. Particularly in romantic relationships — that's the kiss of death."

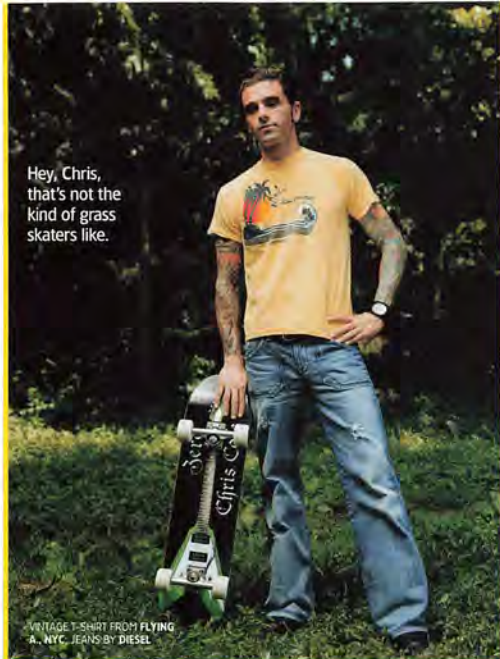
Armchair psychologists might like to know that Carrabba's parents are Italian Catholics who divorced when he was 3. His mother raised her three sons (Carrabba is the middle child) alone, first in West Hartford, Connecticut, and then in Boca Raton, Florida. A worker for non-profit organizations, she instilled in Carrabba a fierce sense of morality and responsibility. "My family dynamic sometimes made me feel older than my peers," he says. "I don't feel I was robbed of my youth, but I was suddenly aware that it doesn't come back, and I was watching friends of mine rushing through it."

In Boca Raton, he took up skateboarding, which led him to music — chiefly hardcore bands like Minor Threat and Operation Ivy and English glum-rockers like the Cure and the Smiths. His first career, however, was teaching. He taught preschool and ran an after-school program for special-education students, for which he still volunteers when he has the time. It's not a great leap from a summer camp sing-along to a Dashboard Confessional show.

"I have a personal relationship with my fan base," he says. "I feel protective of them, and I think they feel that way about me too."

Sometimes this relationship gets almost too personal, and Carrabba finds himself in the reluctant role of guidance counselor. "I receive some letters and

Hey, Chris, that's not the kind of grass skaters like.



VINTAGE T-SHIRT FROM FLYING A, NYC. JEANS BY DIESEL

"People are surprised that I smile a lot and that I'm not mopey."



e-mails with overwhelming personal details. I'm happy people feel they can trust me, but I don't necessarily know what to do with that information. I don't have a degree in psychiatry. But I am willing to listen."

Although Carrabba is 27, his sense of wounded morality chimes with listeners still young enough to be shocked when lovers lie. The emotional ferocity of his first two albums stems from one traumatic breakup and, to a lesser extent, two earlier ones. His skill is to focus on the details (most famously "Your hair, it's everywhere," from "Screaming Infidelities"), but there's a danger that they'll betray their subjects' identities.

"It's funny," he observes. "I said to the girl I wrote some of my more biting

lyrics about, 'Sorry if the fact that I sing these songs is hurtful.' She said, 'You know what? When our relationship was really bad, I spoke about it to our mutual friends, so I'm sorry, too.' I thought that was enormously gracious of her."

Are you in a relationship now?

He sighs, as though he has been expecting this question but isn't at all happy about it. "I have to protect my private life."

If we don't pry any further, will you at least give us a yes or no?

"Yes," he says, finally. "Not giving away too much, yes."



ON THE LYRIC SHEET that Interscope gives *Blender* is one rogue song that isn't on the new CD. Called "This Old Wound," it's the most tortured song Carrabba has ever written: "I've been bleeding well from this old wound/Cleaning it with salt so it will still feel new." Then, later: "Everyone watched me waste myself/And everyone cheered at last."

Carrabba says he wrote it when he felt like he would be forever branded Mr. Misery. "It's about a point when I felt I was trapped and could only write about one subject. And that's not true."

Indeed, *Blender* is pleased to report that Carrabba doesn't spend any time at all during the course of the afternoon agonizing over his romantic tribulations. "People who have listened to only the first two records are surprised that I smile a lot and that I'm not mopey," he says cheerfully. "I don't need to be mopey. I've got a great outlet for that — I can write a song. So who needs to carry that crap around all day?" [BLENDER]

USEFUL TIPS FROM BLENDER!

HOW TO...

Have Hair Like Chris Carrabba's

Roberto Patane, "master stylist" at famed Manhattan barbershop Paul Molé, makes style-challenged *Blender* managing editor Adam Bell into a supercharged emo heartthrob. Well, nearly. . .



Get "the Dashboard" at Paul Molé, 1031 Lexington Avenue, New York, 212-535-8461. Ask for Roberto.



1

THE WASH

>> "First," Roberto says, "we're going to shampoo Adam's hair to make it more manageable. If you look at a picture of Mr. Carrabba, you can see that his hair is wavy. But Adam here has pin-straight hair — Mr. Carrabba wishes he had hair as straight as Adam's."



2

THE CUT

>> "Mr. Carrabba's cut — let's call it 'the Dashboard' — has the back buzzed up and the front gelled," Roberto says. "So I'm going to shorten the sides and then taper it a little bit. I can tell that Mr. Carrabba cares about the way he looks: His hair is cut by an artist."



3

THE MOLDING

>> "Now we clean the neck and cut a little more," Roberto concludes. "We're going to throw on some Tea Tree pomade. . . There. Adam's ready to play some — what did you call it? Oh, yeah — emcore! But he's going to have to go downtown for some tattoos."



4

FINAL VERDICT

>> Adam says: "Before, I looked like a complete dweeb. Now I look like a semi-hard-rocking dweeb. It was a very nice experience." What a dweeb!

bloomingdale's

^{JEANS}
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THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT >>>>>>

MARY J. BLIGE

→ She owns more shoes than Imelda Marcos, never flies commercial and counts Elton John among her bosom pals. But for the onetime drug and alcohol abuser, life hasn't always been so ghetto fabulous. "I've been in hell," she tells *Blender*. . .

BY DAVID KEEPS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT MAXWELL

1 SHE COULDN'T HAVE A MORE ALL-AMERICAN NAME.

Mary Jane Blige. "My sister, LaTonya Jenae Blige, she got the cool name," Blige says. Mary's mother, Cora, raised her four kids the best she could. But money was too tight to mention, and the family ended up moving from the Bronx to Schlobohm Gardens, a housing project in Yonkers, New York — a place so rough it was nicknamed "Slow Bomb."



Mary J. inspects her personal store of uranium.

2 GEORGIA WAS ON HER MIND.

She spent summers with her grandparents in Savannah, Georgia. "We used to crab, pick beans, clean fish and run around in the thousand-degree heat," she remembers.

3 JESUS IS HER MAIN MAN.

Blige doesn't like to "ram my religious feelings down people's throats," but she does say that she needs "spiritual assistance." It wasn't always that way. "I grew up in the Pentecostal church — you know, the kind where everybody's running around, jumping and hollering. I really didn't get anything much out of the church; I just loved singing in front of a bunch of people."

4 MARY WAS ONE OF THE BOYS.

"I was not a girl. Not that I was a dyke or anything like that; I just didn't have what all the other kids had, and I never fit in with the girl

stuff. But all the guys were really cool. They didn't judge me, and they'd pass me a blunt or whatever the case may be."

5 MRS. MICHAEL JACKSON?

The first record Blige ever bought was "Rapper's Delight," by the Sugarhill Gang. But her heart belonged to the future King of Pop. "I used to think I was going to marry that man," she remembers.

6 MARY'S FIRST TIME WAS FORGETTABLE.

Blige didn't have a lot of boy-friends, and she says that her first sexual experience "looked like something that felt really good on TV but felt like someone had sliced me in half with a knife."

7 SHE CAN FOLD CLOTHES, BUT DON'T ASK HER TO.

Her first paying job was at a department store on Central Avenue in New York's Westchester County. "I worked there folding →

Mary J. Blige: Always
easy to spot in the
Tour de France

“I’m a brick house, but you respect this brick house.”



kids' clothes for \$3.75, or whatever the minimum wage was back then. I hated it — three weeks and I was outta there."

8 SHE NEVER GOT HER "GOOD ENOUGH DIPLOMA."

Blige, now 32, dropped out of school when she was 16. "The only part I liked were the talent shows and spelling bees. My attention span in there was zero. The teachers, everybody, just made me sick. I think that if I had finished school, I would have no common sense right now." She has talked about getting a General Equivalency Diploma. "I don't take pride in my ignorance," she says.

9 KARAOKE MADE HER FAMOUS.

Once, when Blige was hanging out at a mall in White Plains, New York, she went into a recording booth and sang Anita Baker's 1986 hit "Caught Up in the Rapture" to a karaoke track. Her stepfather passed the tape to a friend at Uptown Records, who gave her a job singing backup vocals for such rappers as Father MC.

10 SHE TOOK MEETINGS IN A LAUNDRY ROOM.

When she was 19, Blige signed her first proper record deal — on the top of a dryer in the housing project where she was raised. "That's called wanting to get out of the projects!" she says.

11 SHE KNEW DIDDY WHEN HE WAS DADDY.

At Uptown Records, there was an intern named Sean Combs, who called himself Puff Daddy. He was the guy who crowned Mary "the queen of hip-hop soul," and he produced songs on her first record, 1992's *What's the 411?* They parted ways after her second album (*My Life*, 1994) but recently reunited on her latest LP, *Love & Life*. "We both had a lot of growing up to do," Blige says. "It was like we never separated. I call him Puff — I ain't going for the Diddy!"

12 SHE HAS MIXED BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE.

Blige once dated Cedric "K-Ci" Hailey, of Jodeci. It was a stormy affair that led her to cover such heartbreak songs as *My Life*'s "I'm Goin' Down." "That's a whole other book that we closed," she says of the relationship. "And we gonna keep that one closed."

"So where does the chauffeur sit?"



"I said a hip-hop like hippie" and so forth

13 "EVER SINCE I WAS 16, I'VE BEEN IN HELL."

You name the vice, Blige has done it: booze, drugs, abusive relationships, depression, suicidal tendencies. "*My Life* should have been named *Help*, because I was ready to go! Like, get out of here, planet Earth, goodbye, die. I was so suicidal I would draw men to me who wanted to kill me, too. I didn't think I was pretty or smart. I thought I was a piece of shit," she says with a laugh. "A piece of shit with a nice weave and makeup."

14 MARY INVENTED "GHETTO FABULOUSNESS."

At first, she dressed like a dude, not a lady. But she soon discovered that she could sing for her bling, and ended up a "label girl" in designer clothes. She was fond of sunglasses to hide the ravages of late nights, and was famous for showing up to work late or high, or both. "I definitely thought life was one big party," she has said.



Blige and producer Sean Combs, 2002

15

SHE HAS SPENT SOME TIME IN TATTOO PARLORS.

"When I was in L.A., I had nothing to do but get tattoos. I have seven. I can't even begin to show you all of them." She has her name on one arm and a cross on the other, two angels above her booty, a butterfly, a rose and the Japanese symbol for strength. "I wouldn't do it again, because they really hurt. But it was all about pain!"



Lance Bass, "very excited" to be in space

16 IS THERE LIFE ON MARS?

Oh, definitely, Blige says, and she isn't talking about that David Bowie song. "I think they're here. And nobody told us about it yet, or it might be invisible or some shit."

17 SHE'S NOW CLEAN AND PRETTY MUCH SOBER.

She used to be down for a line or 200. "I didn't need rehab to recover from drugs," she says. "I'll tell you what the gift was: *knowing*. It's like, a light comes on, and then you're done with whatever has been holding you back." She used to smoke cigars and cigarettes, but she doesn't anymore. "I might occasionally one day. I might have something to drink, too. But it's not a priority. I used to be an alcoholic, to be quite honest."

18 SHE USED TO THINK ABOUT BEING A EXOTIC DANCER.

"My dream back in the day, when I was drinking, was that I wanted to be a stripper." There was just one thing holding her back — the same thing that today keeps her from posing in *Playboy*. "It stops being a mystery when I'm naked," she says. "Then it's like, 'Ah, Mary, we don't want to see you anymore!'"

19 MARY IS BUFF.

"I work very hard in the gym and the results are incredible, so yeah, I want to show it off," she says. "But I won't get caught out there with my nipple hanging out of my dress. If I choose to have my cleavage out, you still take me seriously. I might be a brick house, but you respect this brick house. 'Cause this brick house does her job well."

20 OH, NO, NOT I... I WILL SURVIVE.

By 1997, with the release of *Share My World* (produced by Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis), Blige was coming out of her emotional tailspin. The album debuted at number 1. "If you can survive all of that, you



Tell it over a great tasting, less filling Miller Lite.

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definitely want to find out why," she says. "What is your destiny? I found out that my job is to give." She gave until it hurt in confessional songs that made her a legend. "I didn't want to tell people my business," she says now. "I just had no choice."

21 MARY KNOWS OF WHAT SHE SINGS.

"Women deal with something at a certain time of the month, and you need to really take it easy on us," says the author of "PMS," a song from her 2001 CD, *No More Drama*. "Just take it easy on us if you love us, because around that time every woman is not peaceful."

22 SHE ISN'T WRITING THOSE FEELIN'-LOWDOWN, HURTIN'-BAD SONGS ANYMORE.

"Artists shouldn't be obligated to live for the public," she says firmly. "My personal life is mine. If you don't want to be my fan anymore just because I'm happy, then to hell with you."

23 MRS. MARY J. BLIGE!

She has been engaged since December 2001. "I have to have a reasonably long engagement, because I have to get to know people," she asserts. Her fiancé is Kendu Isaacs, whom Blige calls "the other half of my brain." They met in a recording studio when he was helping to produce Queen Latifah, and Blige did a song with her. "I saw him, he saw me, and it was like, 'Hmmm?'" she remembers. Then Isaacs came to a party after one of Blige's concerts. "And that's when it was like, 'Oh! Then 'Oooh!'"

24 MR. MARY J. BLIGE?

The strangest rumor Blige has ever heard about herself? "Are you ready for this? That I was a man. Like, I'm some kind of transvestite or got some kind of operation. If I'm a man, I feel sorry for men! I mean, really — we're in trouble if I'm a man."

25 STRANGE THINGS HAPPEN WHEN MARY MEETS PEOPLE.

Blige has a lot of famous fans. Annie Lennox, for instance. "It was something else meeting her," Blige says. "She's beautiful inside and out. When you meet people, you get to see who they really are, and it was like our souls were sucking each other up."



Mary J. pictured at the Leaning Tower of Pisa (probably), 1992



The future Mr. and Mrs. Blige



Share My World, 1997



DO NOT EVEN SUGGEST WATCHING THE EXORCIST WITH HER.

"It was the first movie that I had ever seen. I was 8 years old, and it scared the living daylights out of me. You still can't get me to watch that movie today. I will not do it."

26 MARY MEETS A LOT OF PEOPLE.

Everyone wants to work with her. For *Love & Life*, Blige recorded a track with Eve and Dr. Dre ("Not Today") and did duets with 50 Cent ("Let Me Be the 1") and Method Man (the album's first single, "Love @ 1st Sight").

27 SHE PLAYS ELTON JOHN'S PIANO.

Blige has a guitar, but she's much better on the 88s. Elton John gave her a piano as a housewarming gift. "Elton is my friend. People don't believe that. They think I'm just using it as a marketing tool or some shit, but this man is my friend. He keeps it real."

28 SHE'S ALSO AN ACTRESS, KINDA-SORTA.

Blige did an episode of the Lifetime series *Strong Medicine* and also made her film debut in 2001, in a low-budget movie called *Prison Song*, which also featured rapper Q-Tip. "I got to do a lot of screaming and stab one of the correction officers with a pen in his neck."



Elton John: "God bless Rogaine!"



In Lifetime's *Strong Medicine*, 2001

30 MARY WOULD LIKE TO BE SPIDER-MAN. EITHER THAT, OR BE ABLE TO FLY.

"I can't save the world, that's for sure. But I would love to fly!" She'd certainly save money; she hasn't been on a commercial airline since September 11, 2001. "I'm not dealing with public transportation. I'll take a private plane or my bus."

31 ON THE BLIGE BUS, IT'S ALL ABOUT TIVO.

"I record *Twilight Zone* episodes. I have all of them, from 1 to 156. My favorite is 'To Serve Man.' It's about aliens reading a book that turns out to be a cookbook for preparing humans. Freaky!"

32 MARY IS THE IMELDA MARCOS OF HIP-HOP SOUL.

When she goes shoe shopping, sometimes she gets so overwhelmed, she'll start testifying. "I walk in a store, and I'm like, 'Whoaahaay!'" She has so many pairs, she's lost count. She has also begun designing boots, but she isn't going to go all Sean John just yet. "One day I'll do a clothing line, but it's all about me right now. I'm not selling anything — let me wear it all first!"

33 WANT A HUG? SEEK OUT MARY.

Ms. Blige would most like to be known not as a singer or an actress or even a footwear designer, but as an approachable person. "When people remember me, I want them to think, 'She was eye-to-eye, and she didn't let her career define her. She was a person like us.' When you see me on the street, you can give me a hug, like, easy." [BLENDER]

RETHINK THE ART GALLERY



RETHINK

REFRESH

REMIX



Rock Manager for a Day!

➔ Eager to learn if we have what it takes to make our way in the talent-management industry (sticky fingers, violent tendencies), *Blender* asked pop maestros **Fountains of Wayne** if we could steward their career for 24 hours. Saying yes was their first mistake. . . .

BY ADRIAN DEEVOY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEGO



YOU DON'T NEED to be a loudmouthed, louder-shirted, Grandma-selling bastard to be a rock manager, but they are all valid qualifications.

If, by chance, you also have the sensitivity of Genghis Khan, Charles Manson's management skills and ascribe to Richard Nixon's intriguing take on the truth, then you're going to go far. That's not to say that all managers of rock bands are megalomaniacs, liars and psychopaths. Just most of them.

Blender elected to dip a toe into the choppy waters of band management in the hopes of altering the public's perception of the stogie-toting merchants who have given the profession such a bad name over the years.

We wanted to get back the dash of panache that Andrew Loog Oldham brought to the Rolling Stones in the '60s. The fatherly protectiveness exemplified by Led Zeppelin's Peter Grant in the '70s. The cool business acumen of U2's Paul McGuinness in the '80s and '90s. All this, with luck, combined with the hair and makeup of Sharon Osbourne.

Now all we needed was a band naive enough, or just plain game enough, to believe this crock.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

ENTER FOUNTAINS OF Wayne, New Jersey's finest purveyors of handcrafted power-pop and proud creators of *Welcome Interstate Managers*, one of this year's most beguiling albums.

Formed "sometime in the previous century" by songwriting talents Chris Collingwood and Adam Schlesinger, FOW have enjoyed steady collegiate success, toured the world and elsewhere



Wayne's World:
The Fountains
performing in
England, 1999

and "discovered many interesting things about the music business" (i.e., they were dropped by their previous record company).

Now they have a new album (which sold a healthy if hardly record-breaking 8,400 copies its first week) and 20 U.S. dates to play before possibly heading to Europe for further gigs and promotional activities. These boys need a manager.

Of course, Fountains of Wayne already *have* management, the mighty Q Prime team of Peter Mensch and Cliff Bernstein (whose other clients include Metallica, Def Leppard, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Shania Twain), but Q Prime has recklessly agreed to hand over the reins to *Blender* for 24 hours to see if we

can't enhance FOW's shot at world domination.

"Can't *Blender* just give us some money to spend?" asks a

wary Schlesinger at Q Prime headquarters in New York. "Like you did with the Flaming Lips?"

"And they blew it on strippers and Pepto-Bismol," Collingwood marvels. "You'd have thought the Flaming Lips would have bought art books and . . . sashimi."

Blender has called an early-morning band meeting in order to assess FOW's current position, come up with a game plan and make some strategic decisions that will ensure their place in rock & roll history. But first, some breakfast.

Guitarist Jody Porter and drummer Brian Young have joined the songwriting nucleus for this crucial brainstorming session, although judging by their

Fountains of Wayne, from
left: Adam Schlesinger,
Brian Young, Chris
Collingwood, Jody Porter





This is going really well!

This is going really badly.



Elvis renegotiates his contract.

The Seven Golden Rules Of Rock Management

Follow these hard-earned lessons as practiced by managerial legends and success will be but a royalty-swindle away

1 GET A SLICE OF THE PUBLISHING PIE

From the moment Elvis Presley became famous, **Colonel Tom Parker** insisted that he took a percentage of his charge's song-writing royalties (even though Elvis wrote neither music nor lyrics).

2 LAUGH IN THE FACE OF FIREARMS

While collecting money from a promoter on behalf of Led Zeppelin, **Peter Grant** was confronted with a gun. The ex-wrestler's reaction? A throaty chuckle and the following advice: "Put it away, you silly little cunt."

3 DON'T BELIEVE YOUR HYPE

Having successfully managed the Sex Pistols, **Malcolm McLaren** thought he could do no wrong. Three words: Bow Wow Wow.

4 NEVER MINCE YOUR WORDS

Having briefly managed Billy Corgan's Smashing Pumpkins, **Sharon Osbourne** dismissed the tortured composer as "a baldie twat in a dress."

5 GET PHYSICAL

Jake Riviera had a simple solution for any rock writer who dared to question Elvis Costello's genius: threaten to throw him down some stairs.

6 DANGLE YOUR DEBTORS

Following a dispute in 1966 with Bee Gees manager Robert Stigwood, **Don Arden** proposed hanging him out of a hotel window by his ankles.

7 ALWAYS CARRY A CRICKET BAT

Spinal Tap's manager, **Ian Faith**, was rarely seen without this very English accessory — a useful tool, he said, for "prising the rent out of the local Hebrews." **ADRIAN DEEVOY**



Above: Sex Pistols Svengali Malcolm McLaren (middle) with Johnny Rotten and Paul Cook. Left: Peter Grant and Robert Plant

unfamiliarity with their current surroundings ("Uh, where's the bathroom, dude?"), they are not regular visitors to the Q Prime nerve center.

Coffee and bagels consumed, the *Blender* agenda opens to a muted response. Item 1: Has the band considered changing its image at all?

"Yes," Schlesinger, 34, says with a frown, "and we came to the decision that we're not going to."

Your new management team was thinking you could maybe look a little younger.

"Fine," he agrees, "but only if we can look really young. I mean, dress like toddlers."

Seriously, guys, can we discuss getting a stylist in here to make you all slightly more sk8er-boi-ish? We really have to think of the youth market.

"Oh, puh-lease," sighs Collingwood, also 34, tugging at his straight blond hair. "I'm not sure we're really a 'skater' band."

Point taken.

Strike the stylist.

Now, as sales of the new album are merely encouraging rather than crack-the-Cristal, we need to explore a few alternative sources of income.

"What? Like turning tricks?" Porter, 33, drawls. "I'm cool with that."

More along the lines of extracurricular songwriting, sponsorship and gimmicks. If, for example, Céline Dion were to approach us looking for a big ballad, would FOW be up for writing one?

"We already have," Collingwood says brightly. "We were looking on Diane Warren's Web site [Warren is a prolific ballad writer responsible for much high-class stadium Zippo fodder], and we noticed that a lot of her songs have the

"We were going to do that once. But with dwarves. On a conveyor belt."

☆

word heart in the title. So the song we've written for Céline is called 'Suck My Heart.' I'd love to hear her sing it, because she's got a great set of pipes."

"She's got real balls, too," adds Young, 35, before coming up with the first of the band's unreasonable

demands. "Can you get ['80s New Wave footnote] Donnie Iris to support us in Pittsburgh? And can he join us onstage for a version of 'Love Is Like a Rock'?"

That shouldn't be a problem. We'll call Donnie's peeps. Hey, how 'bout this: As a tie-in with your surefire hit single "Stacy's Mom," we could get, say, 50 good-looking mothers to get up onstage each night to dance behind the band. Is that idea a go?

"We were going to do that once," Collingwood recalls. "But with dwarves. On a conveyor belt."

"But dwarves just aren't funny anymore," Schlesinger complains. "They stopped being funny in 1996."

So we'll put the moms on the "maybe" pile and move on. Staples, the office-supply chain, has asked if you would play its Christmas party. Given that your new album exquisitely limns the sadness of cubicle culture, this one seems like money, boys.

"Sure," Schlesinger blurts. "I wanted to get married in Staples. I said to my

wife, 'They have plenty of aisles.'"

The only problem is that they don't want you to play live — they have asked if you could lip-sync the entire album.

"We can do that."

And not hang around too long afterward drinking all the hooch.

"Cool."

There's another minor hitch: The party is on Christmas Day.

"Great."

In Mexico.

"We're there."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE MEETING CONCLUDES with a free and frank exchange on sponsorship. The band seems strangely resistant to the new management's credo: It's not the principle, it's the money.

"We've given this a lot of thought," Schlesinger says, nodding. "It's not that we're anti-sponsorship, but the product has to be right. We'd be comfortable with two products: The first is *Viz* magazine [a puerile yet hilarious British comic book]. We'd be proud to have their brand logo on our bass drum."

We'll get their marketing squad to green-light an endorsement, but the people at Viz are famously poor payers. They'll probably suggest sponsoring the entire tour for something around \$2.

Schlesinger, the Fountains' business brain, squints inscrutably.

"Two-fifty," he says, and the matter is closed.



"The only other sponsor we'd really consider," Collingwood announces, "is Ovaltine." As he unveils his plan for distributing the malted bedtime beverage at gigs via "tasting booths" and perhaps getting the drink's ambassadors, the Ovaltinies, to come to shows, our management meeting dissolves into gibberish before our very ears.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"OVALTINE?" RUMBLES Cliff Bernstein. "Jesus Christ!"

With his big white beard and long gray hair, Bernstein looks like Santa Claus in summertime. His measured tone and thoughtful pauses belie his reputation as the fiercest manager in rock. It is said that his partner, Peter Mensch, does all the barking, but when some real ass-kicking is required, they call for Bernstein.

"That's true to an extent," Bernstein says good-naturedly. "And really, that's what I do for Fountains of Wayne. I'm like a guided missile. If there's a problem with a territory or release dates or artwork, they aim me at the trouble area, and away I go."

Because he's the man who brought us Rush and the Scorpions (yes!) and now manages the cream of the planet's hard-rock outfits, it is difficult to imagine



Bernstein warming to the literary, dare we say Raymond Carver-esque works that FOW create.

"I just loved the songs, and Chris's voice," Bernstein says. "It's very hard to find a unique voice, and he has one. But essentially, good songs are what this business is based upon, and Fountains of Wayne have great songs."

Bernstein's "workable dream" for Fountains of Wayne is to elevate them beyond college airplay and critics' favorites (reviews of *Welcome Interstate Managers* have been universally glowing). He wants to secure a Top 40 single, MTV, Blink-182's audience and Simple

Plan's merchandising, but he admits it will be tough.

"You, as their manager," he says with a grin, "have to constantly remind them that this is no slam-dunk. They have to work their asses off. Remind them of their history: We've had disappointing sales; we were dropped by our label. When they turn around and ask you, 'Why the fuck are we in Pittsburgh again?', your job is to remind them just how hard it has been in the past."

Blender's first failure as a manager is a fundamental one: When ferrying your band via

limousine to a crucial photo session, do not forget to bring the name and address of the studio. As FOW stand around smoking cigarettes outside, their gently perspiring manager checks through 14 floors of what might be the right building, praying that he'll strike it lucky and locate the elusive shoot.

Studio found and pictures taken, the band trudges off to rehearsal. But before they leave, Fountains of Wayne have one final request of their management.

"It's just that I need a new apartment," Porter says apologetically. "Would it be possible for you to figure something out before, like, tomorrow?" [BLENDER]



"Er, aren't you the weird dude from Radiohead?"

FUNNY IN THE

→ Sometimes, leading the world's most scrutinized rock band makes Thom Yorke nervous. Unhappy. Drives him mad, even. But not today. Today — brace yourselves — the **Radiohead** frontman is smiling! Drinking champagne! Cracking jokes! What gives? "I'm happy!" he tells *Blender*. "Cheers!"

BY MIRANDA SAWYER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES DIMMOCK



'HEAD

X IN THE ARTFUL, distressed environs of the Soho House, an exclusive members-only club in New York, Thom Yorke is being served a drink. Perched on a just-off-the-ground seat that resembles a giant piece of candy, his hair stuck up like a baby bird's, looking even smaller than he usually does (he's five-foot-five), Yorke gazes impassively as the gorgeous waitress sinks to her knees to give him his champagne. His T-shirt reads YOU WILL DO FOR NOW. As the waitress sashays off, Yorke waits a beat, then turns to *Blender* and says, "Champagne. Geisha girls kneeling at your feet. Welcome to my world."

Thom Yorke in sense-of-humor shocker! Thom Yorke in sexual-innuendo

horror! Surely the earnest, highbrow lead singer of Radiohead is above such base wisecracks. We have been told, for 10 long years, that he and his band are serious. No jokes allowed.

The collegiate five-piece from Oxford, England, makes sounds that range from thundering guitar to free-form jazz to synthesized blips, topped with songs that speak of frustrated hearts, of paranoid minds, of anti-corporate politics and the soul-horror that's lurking beneath contemporary Western life. Funny: no. Sexy: uh-uh.

Not that Yorke's quip is representative of a change of musical direction. Radiohead's new LP, *Hail to the Thief*, their sixth album, is hardly the

soundtrack to *American Pie* 3. Its 14 tracks sport such titles as "The Gloaming" (threatening twilight), "Myxomatosis" (a disease that kills bunny rabbits) and "We Suck Young Blood" (no explanation necessary). The record can make you feel as though you need a graduate-school degree and a copy of *No Logo* just to comprehend its layers of unease.

Weirdly, Radiohead have publicly described the new record as their "shiny pop" album. But *Hail to the Thief* sure ain't *Justified*, Thom. What's with the "pop" tag?

"I think," he says, "that if you managed to persuade the record company to put any of the tracks on the radio, it would sound like pop. But everyone

From left: James Dimmock; Kaveen Bernard/S.I.N. Corbis

Radiohead, from left:
Jonny Greenwood,
Colin Greenwood,
Thom Yorke, Phil
Selway, Ed O'Brien



thinks of us as an albums band and listens to the record all in one go. People scrutinize it so closely. I have so had enough of this! No one gives that much of a shit."

But with Radiohead, they do.

"I know," Yorke admits, "and that alarms me. We take our music seriously, but not as seriously as people think. Things like 'We Suck Young Blood,' with that fast bit on the piano, it's ridiculous — you can't get chin-scratchy about that. It makes me laugh."

And — look! — he laughs. Yorke's music may not always be upbeat, but he's enjoying himself.

"Yeah, I'm happy," he says convivially. "At this precise moment, anyway."

Someone has given us money to stick the phrase *hail to the thief* on walls all around the world. That made me chuckle for ages." He raises his bubbling glass. "Cheers."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IT'S 2003, AND RADIOHEAD are comfortable in their skin. "It's taken us 10 years to do it, but we have finally moved away from the Method," says guitarist Ed O'Brien. "We used to live the pain. Now we've made a dark record — but we're OK."

He smiles. We're in Edinburgh, Scotland, a week earlier. Backstage after an emotional, intimate gig in front of 1,500 at the Corn Exchange, Radiohead are hosting a party for a select group of fans and friends. The small room is lit murkily by candles. There's no background music and not much booze around, just a selection of bottles and cans on a buffet table. The event has more in common with an impoverished student's birthday party than a multimillion-selling rock group's after-show celebration.

Radiohead wander around, chatting quietly. It's hard to pick them out: Other than Yorke, their star quality is set on dim. O'Brien is taller than most, with floppy hair and a floppy shirt; he looks like a scruffy extra from a Merchant-Ivory film. He talks and guffaws with bassist Colin Greenwood. Greenwood's boggly eyes and hip get-up — a pinstriped jacket over a crumpled T-shirt and jeans — looks vaguely rock-starry, but no more so than any Williamsburg wannabe.

Greenwood's younger brother, Jonny (who plays the guitar, the laptop and anything else that happens to be at hand), appears as though he's gotten lost on the way to a geek convention. He shifts his weight from foot to foot; his arms hang from their sockets like rope. The candle-light catches his cheekbones. Drummer Phil Selway is wearing a suit and has the distracted air of a dad, which he is.

And Yorke, compact, busy, ever so slightly intimidating (is it his drooping eyes, or is he actually angry?), moves lightly in big boots. He's laughing about the band's hotel: "We arrived there, 8 in the morning, on three hours' sleep, and it was like a country club, just heaving with golfers in Pringle sweaters. I took one look and went, 'Nooooo!'"

They're a disparate bunch, Radiohead, but tonight they share one mood:

positivity. In fact, Colin Greenwood and O'Brien have the giggles.

"Ten years ago, the big songs of the summer in America were 'Creep,' Soul Asylum's 'Runaway Train' and 'Two Princes' by Spin Doctors," O'Brien says. He makes a face.

"Oh, I quite liked the Spin Doctors," Greenwood says, grinning. "I liked the woolly hat. He looked like a struggling juggler from the covered market in Oxford."

Bah! It's a disgrace how generous and well-adjusted these boys are. After all, they made their name with "Creep," one of rock's most searing paeans to self-hatred and outsiderdom. It's not their job to be content.



Until now, in fact, they weren't. At the beginning, they were frustrated: "Creep," from their 1993 album, *Pablo Honey*, was so perfect, so universal, it sucked the oxygen from the rest of the band's music — and, therefore, from the band itself. (Yorke later wrote "My Iron Lung"

about the experience.) Then they were overwhelmed: Their second and third records, *The Bends* (1995) and *OK Computer* (1997), won over the world. Filling the void created by Kurt Cobain's suicide and U2's flirtation with irony, Radiohead became the new "only band that mattered," and their artful grandeur breathed new life into rock.



After that, Radiohead were severely at odds. The band's success threw Yorke off-kilter, and he insisted that Radiohead move away from the mainstream. He made his compadres learn new instruments, such as the computer and the "AS." "It's like a telephone exchange," Jonny Greenwood says. The music stepped off pop's edge into wild, thin air: They dropped their quiet verse/majestic chorus formula, using jazz and classical forms to render their songs intricate, offbeat, unsettling works.

Kid A (2000) kept them in the studio for a year — they lived there, wrote there and fought there. The pressure was intense; the band almost split up. *Amnesiac* (2001) was nearly as fraught. How on earth did they get through *Hail to the Thief*?



Jonny Greenwood forgets his guitar. Again.



"We did the very un-Radiohead thing of going to Los Angeles to record, and stuck to a regime of putting down a track a day," Yorke says.

"We loved L.A.," Jonny chimes in. "One day we'll end up recording in the Viper Room with an ex-member of the Sex Pistols and someone from Duran Duran." He laughs merrily.

"This is what we do," O'Brien says simply. "This is our everyday life. We might as well have a good time living it."

So out goes stampy-foot anti-corporate sulking ("Lyrics reproduced by kind permission even though we wrote them," *OK Computer*'s liner notes say); in comes media professionalism. The band is working this record, and it shows: *Hail to the Thief* logged 350,000 sales its first week of U.S. release, an amazing feat given its complexity and unnerving atmosphere.

But Radiohead are far from turning into American Idols. They might be public-relations troopers, but the product they're pushing is still weighty. Yorke has said that he can see why many fans interpreted the new album's lyrics as an antiwar tract. He admits he's concerned with politics. "Bono says I'm a zealot," he says, smiling. "Whereas he's a pragmatist. He gets things done."

Bono also says, when *Blender* speaks to him by telephone, that Radiohead's lead singer is "an angel singing about his devils," which is as good an analysis as

any of Thom Yorke's appeal. The U2 frontman continues: "It's that duality — the band is so tough, and yet his voice is so beautiful and fragile. Radiohead make sacred music."



YORKE AND BLENDER have moved next door to the Edinburgh party, to a quiet, neat dressing room. As he nibbles on rabbit food — he's a vegetarian and has recently given up wheat and dairy products — Yorke talks of what eats at him. First, the political. He protested against the invasion of Iraq by demonstrating at Fairford, in Gloucestershire, home base of the attacking B-52's.

"Initially, I supported the Iraq war," he says. "I had arguments with Ed about it, because he was anti-straight off. But by the time it started, I felt very strongly against it, because we had

no moral authority. Not only did we ignore and subvert the U.N., but we were the people who started it in the first place. Rumsfeld sold Saddam the anthrax; the British divided the country up, us and the French. . . . I'm looking after my little boy and thinking about his future, and the whole world has gone Orwell. On a day-to-day basis, I can't cope with it."

"Bono says I'm a zealot. Whereas he's a pragmatist."

Being unable to cope is a common Yorke theme. He takes everyday phrases — *This is what you get when you mess with us; She looks like the real thing; Just because you feel it doesn't mean it's real* — and imbues them with threat and torment. "A Wolf at the Door," the final track on *Hail to the Thief*, is a direct account of Yorke having a breakdown. After the release of *OK Computer*, he says, he went into "a bad head space" and began to hallucinate. He decided that the way to conquer this was to wander around Oxford trying "to see something normal": "Endless days, walking around, trying to watch people. It was bad. The ultimate reality check."

Now, six years later, Yorke walks around Oxford with his longtime girlfriend Rachel and their 2-year-old son, Noah. They tour the ancient city, listening to the bells that ring from its steeples.

Yorke spends a lot of time with his son, though he doesn't sing to him, because "he won't let me! Every time I go near the piano, Noah says, 'No, no, not like that.' He sings to me, though. He makes up songs. The best is in the morning, though, when he's singing to himself. It's lovely."

It's lovely, too, to watch Yorke when he talks of his son; his face opens like a flower. But it soon closes again, after *Blender* asks a question he deems too

personal. Notoriously guarded about his private life, he stops talking, stops eating, twists his body into knots. In fact, he's so paranoid about his privacy that it takes a few minutes for him to confirm his birthdate: October 7, 1968. He flatly refuses to give his retired parents' names or disclose what they did for a living (though his father's occupation is known; he was a chemical-equipment supplier).

"You're not upsetting me," he says. "But sometimes I come away from interviews feeling invaded. I'm working out if I'm going to feel invaded or not. And . . . yeah. I'm not answering that." (This came in response to the question, Did you and your younger brother, Andrew, share a bedroom when you were small?)

Yorke is more forthcoming about himself than his loved ones. *Blender* learns that he wasn't athletic when he was younger — not because he wasn't in shape, but because of his droopy left eye: "I can't judge distances. I can't see a ball properly." He was born with it completely shut, and had a series of operations to graft in muscle so it could open. He still can't see perfectly: "I see best through a pinhole, which is useful." He got accustomed to his eye when he was young, but it still gets him into trouble. If you sit to his left, as *Blender* is doing at the moment, it seems as though he is constantly throwing you baleful looks. "I know," he protests. "I can't go out on a Friday night, because I look at people in a certain way and they think I want a fight."

Still, when he was young he could see well enough to ride a bike, and he was a good gymnast until his teenage years, when he took up smoking. He went to a public primary school, and then a private high school, Abingdon, along with the rest of Radiohead. His friends at home rejected him because he went there. "They blanked me out. I used to cycle around, and one of them once got his older brother to kick the shit out of me and throw me in the river, just because I'd gone to that school."

Yorke first picked up a guitar when he was 7. He simply walked up to his music teacher and said he wanted to learn. "When I heard Queen for the first time, I went straight into school and told her, 'I want to be Brian May. I'm going to be a rock star.' She went, 'Of course you are, dear.'" When he was a teenager, frustrated and unhappy in his new, tony school, he would draw pictures of how his future band would look — where the instruments would be onstage, what they would look like. It would be a four-piece.

So what happened to your vision?

"I met Colin."

As 15-year-olds, Colin Greenwood and

RIP! MIX! BURN! >>>

What? Six-plus albums, and still no best-of-Radiohead CD on the market? It's *Blender* to the rescue!

1 "A WOLF AT THE DOOR" HAIL TO THE THIEF

CAPITOL, 2003

Inspired by a ragga freestyle mix tape given to Yorke by a friend. He takes arbitrary lyrical fragments and works them into a rant that mutates into a plea.

BEST MOMENT Yorke chastises badly behaved bankers traveling in first class. (2:23)

2 "LUCKY"

OK COMPUTER

CAPITOL, 1997

A classic on-the-ropes lyric from Yorke swells from lugubrious beginnings to a wondrous operatic catharsis.

BEST MOMENT Yorke wearily sings, "I feel my luck could change" (0:36)

3 "I WILL"

HAIL TO THE THIEF

CAPITOL, 2003

"The angriest thing I've ever written," Yorke says. Inspired by the United States' accidental bombing of an air-raid shelter during the first Gulf War.

BEST MOMENT All of it.

4 "I MIGHT BE WRONG"

AMNESIAC

CAPITOL, 2001

Yorke claimed that after *Amnesiac*, the band would be writing "shagging music." Here, he already has his underwear and socks off.

BEST MOMENT You think it's

finished. Then a hissing beat and a screeching Yorke bring the climax. (3:51)

5 "LET DOWN"

OK COMPUTER

CAPITOL, 1997

Can a song about stomping on a fly be ecstatically uplifting? Yes, it can.

BEST MOMENT Yorke's mumbled description of frolic in bars: "Disappointed people clinging onto bottles" (0:44)

6 "JUST"

THE BENDS

CAPITOL, 1995

A great song rendered unforgettable by the cryptic video. A man falls to the ground in a London street. Pedestrians rush to his aid. He utters indecipherable words. They fall down, too. Yorke swears he'll never reveal what was said.

BEST MOMENT Deep in the mix, Yorke gets hysterical, improvising, "You do it to yourself!" (3:48)

7 "KILLER CARS"

ITCH (EP)

CAPITOL, 1994

Recorded live in Chicago post-"Creep." At this point, Yorke's writing is only embryonically paranoid. This deals with his fear of car trips.

BEST MOMENT "What if there's somebody overtaking?" frets our nancy boy. (0:16)

RADIOHEAD



GREATEST HITS

8 "CREEP"

ITCH (EP)

CAPITOL, 1994

The famous self-lacerating internal dialogue was never suited to a jagged rock arrangement. This intimate acoustic reading of the dysfunction is far more intense.

BEST MOMENT Between lines, Yorke draws in breath through his teeth like Hannibal Lecter. (2:27)

9 "KNIVES OUT"

AMNESIAC

CAPITOL, 2001

A rare chance for Ed O'Brien to get his ax out of its case. He makes the most of it with a lovely Smiths-like jangle.

BEST MOMENT Yorke's impassioned advice on dealing with rodent infestation: "Catch da mouse, squash his head" (3:48)

10 "PYRAMID SONG"

AMNESIAC

CAPITOL, 2001

Yorke has a bad dream. It concerns an aircraft carrier laden with survivors from an unspecified apocalypse. Girlfriend Rachel rouses him and makes him a cup of tea. Then he writes a song — perhaps their best — about the trauma.

BEST MOMENT Yorke's pale falsetto and Jonny Greenwood's woozy strings combine to convince you the end is indeed nigh. (1:51)

11 "SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK ALIEN"

OK COMPUTER

CAPITOL, 1997

Yorke fantasizes that he's driving alone one night when little spacemen descend and take him to a better world.

BEST MOMENT The floaty keyboard, the eerie guitar strand: So *that's* what an alien abduction feels like. (2:30)

12 "FAKE PLASTIC TREES"

THE BENDS

CAPITOL, 1995

Yorke's doleful drone about watering cans and rubber bands is an epic of simmering ennui and rage.

BEST MOMENT Yorke compares his love to a bottle of Coke ("She tastes like the real thing"). (2:48) MICHAEL ODELL



Yorke weren't friends, but they crashed the same parties. Greenwood wore untards and listened to Alien Sex Fiend; Yorke wore thrift-store suits that his mother altered to fit him. "We'd turn up at parties, and he'd be in a cat suit and I'd be in a sharp suit," Yorke says. One time, with friends, they left a party drunk and decided to play chicken by lying in the middle of the road to see if cars would stop. The first vehicle that approached was a police car. They didn't play again.

Yorke found the parties hard. He had hit puberty young, at 11, but Abingdon School was for boys only. "Going to single-sex schools is damaging, and it takes a long time to sort it out," he says. "Because you want to get some action, and you can't get any. And when you do, it's fucked up. I used to go to these parties because I wanted to get into trouble and meet girls, and that's where you go, but it's such a ridiculously pressurized situation. I'd get [drunk] out of my mind and then take charge of the music: 'Fuck the lot of you; we're listening to Joy Division.'"

Their love of Joy Division united Radiohead, along with their worship of the Smiths and R.E.M. O'Brien was recruited because he looked like Morrissey. They stole Jonny Greenwood from Andrew Yorke's band. Selway came

along for the ride, and then there were five. They practiced in a sympathetic teacher's music rooms.

But aside from the band, and art, which he enjoyed, Yorke's school life went badly. He was unhappy and regularly picked on. "Certain people take great pleasure in making others' lives misery. I'm not very tolerant with people like that. If someone pushed me too hard, I'd push

"In school, I was definitely seen as a psycho."

them against the wall, threaten to break their skull — and mean it. I was definitely seen as a psycho."

Yorke reached a crisis point at 16, when he was nearly kicked out of school. He decided to pull back, concentrate, get into art school. Which he did: He enrolled at Exeter University to study English literature and fine art. He came back to Oxford on weekends to practice with the band, and when college ended, his rock-star life began: Radiohead were signed almost immediately thereafter. Jonny Greenwood has been in the band since he was 14. All five know no other way of life. Thank goodness they've begun to enjoy it.

Yorke and *Blender* talk about art for a while. Perhaps as a result of his schooling, he has a healthy cynicism about it. "Nothing's worth 10 thousand, 10 million. . . . I don't buy art. I have got some prints. My favorite is of Millbank, the [British] Labour [Party] headquarters. It's massive.

It's a beautiful black-and-white print, but also scary. The artist has fucked with it in some way. My girlfriend's a printmaker as well, and it was someone she knew."

What do you spend your money on, then, if not art?

"Well . . . I lost most of my money on a house. I had to rebuild it. It was a total nightmare. But that's OK. That's my problem. Silly me."

Jonny Greenwood walks into the room, looking for a soda.

What do you think Thom will be like when he's old, Jonny?

"He'll be mental," Jonny says without missing a beat as he opens the fridge.

"Of course I will! I'll be pissing myself and shouting, relishing my deafness! 'What?'"

Is there anything you'd like to achieve before getting to that exalted grumpy-old-man state, Thom?

He takes another bite of lettuce and has a bit of a think. He laughs again.

"You know, Radiohead isn't a democracy. Most functioning democracies don't function as a democracy. But I am built to listen to people. If somebody in the band says, 'That's not right,' I'm not into it. Even if I was into it 100 percent before, I'm not until we've sorted it out. Which is why," says Thom Yorke, benevolent dictator, bedeviled angel, happy worrier, "I'd make a really good president." [BLENDER]

A JURY OF THEIR PEERS!

Are Radiohead the rock stars' rock stars? Let's ask them!



WAYNE COYNE
THE FLAMING LIPS

Hail to the Thief: moody masterpiece or drone disappointment? Both. More great music and more bad moaning.

Favorite Radiohead album? *Amnesiac*.

Favorite lyric? "I'm a reasonable man/Get off my case," from "Packt Like Sardines in a Tin Box."

Favorite single moment on *OK Computer*? The first minutes of "Airbag" — that weird bass part.

What do you think goes on at a Radiohead after-party? The band discusses when they'll follow our lead and put on animal costumes.



COURTNEY TAYLOR-TAYLOR
THE DANDY WARHOLS

Favorite Radiohead song? "Karma Police."

Favorite lyric? "You're so fucking special," from "Creep."

Unsung hero of band? Ed O'Brien, the mayor of Radiohead.

What's your favorite thing to do while listening to Radiohead? I like to play "Karma Police" over and over.

What do you think goes on at a Radiohead after-party? Thom has a tantrum, and everyone stands around fidgeting and looking at the floor.



WES BORLAND
EX-LIMPBIZKIT GUITARIST
NOW WITH EAT THE DAY

Hail to the Thief: moody masterpiece or drone disappointment? It's a great record.

Complete the following sentence: Radiohead makes me feel all _____ inside. Hopeful that the entire music industry hasn't completely given up on bands that are being brave. Yet.

Favorite lyric? "Black-eyed angels swam with me," from "Pyramid Song."

What do you think goes on at a Radiohead after-party? A bunch of actors look at one another.



CHRISTOPHER O'RILEY
CLASSICAL PIANIST WITH
NEW ALBUM *TRUE LOVE WAITS*:
CHRISTOPHER O'RILEY PLAYS
RADIOHEAD

Complete the following sentence: Radiohead makes me feel all _____ inside. Double-stuff.

Favorite Radiohead lyric? "Your tiny hands/Your crazy kitten smile," from "True Love Waits."

What's your favorite thing to do while listening to Radiohead? Driving and sex, preferably simultaneously.

What do you think goes on at a Radiohead after-party? Lots of pot smoking, drinking and studied anomie.



JASON LYTLE
GRANDADDY

Favorite Radiohead album? *OK Computer*.

Favorite song? "Nice Dream."

Favorite lyric? "Today we escape," from "Exit Music (For a Film)."

Unsung hero of band? Jonny Greenwood, but I believe he prefers this.

What's your favorite thing to do while listening to Radiohead? Wash my Australian Shepherd.

What do you think goes on at a Radiohead after-party? Probably knitting sweaters and watching scrimsaw documentaries. ROB KEMP



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12

Sure it sounds like another absurd advertising claim, but we're serious about this one. Any of these records could end up being the very one that inspires you to take up the accordion, pushes you to work out a little harder at the gym, or, worst case scenario, throw it all away for a job in the music business. Hell, if it wasn't for the Muppet Movie soundtrack we'd have to scour the docks looking for people to staff Tower stores. The point is, there's no telling what the right CD will do for you. And there's no better time to start searching for that CD, what with us featuring the best up-and-coming bands for less than ten bucks. So here, in no particular order, are twelve places you may find that musical epiphany, not counting your local Tower store:

1. Vendetta Red: Slammin' rhythms, sheets of bored-out guitars, and God Of Thunder vocals—prog-rock now goes to 11. 2. Smile Empty Soul: The sound of rage during a body-cavity search, this is some dangerous *&#@. 3. Crash Radio: Hollywood bad boys' fire-breathing bow bitch-slaps tired-ass rock. Tired-ass rock smiles gratefully. 4. Indigenous: 13 years after Stevie Ray Vaughan, four Native-American siblings pick up his blues-rock torch. 5. Sidestepper: Latin rhythms rehear and revolutionize chilly electronic music. Dance lessons now very much required. 6. Yellowcard: Infectious hooks. Singalong choruses. Electric violin. Meet the new punk rock. 7. Hot Hot Heat: Wired, witty synth-punk pack turn in most vital, exciting disc in years. They're Canadian, too. 8. Eve6: Pop punks behind prom song grow up just in time to deliver their career album. 9. Sense Field: A dozen nuggets of soaring, crashing, aching catharsis. We need to lie down. 10. Thrive: Emo-on-'roids SoCal clan constructs monolithic prog-core. Sweet screamin' Moses . . . 11. Kings Of Leon: Four fresh-faced sons of a preacher man throw The Yardbirds onto Skynyrd, light a match, and watch what happens. 12. Cage: God forbid Cage makes it up from the underground: Eminem will wet himself.

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133
ANDREW W.K.

Bust open your piñata — and your keg! Rock's party monster is back

★★★★



120
ASHANTI

The sultry Murder Inc. princess releases her second album. But where's Ja Rule?

★★



138
BOB DYLAN

Fifteen — count 'em — reissues from rock's greatest genius and prankster

★★★★★

The Guide

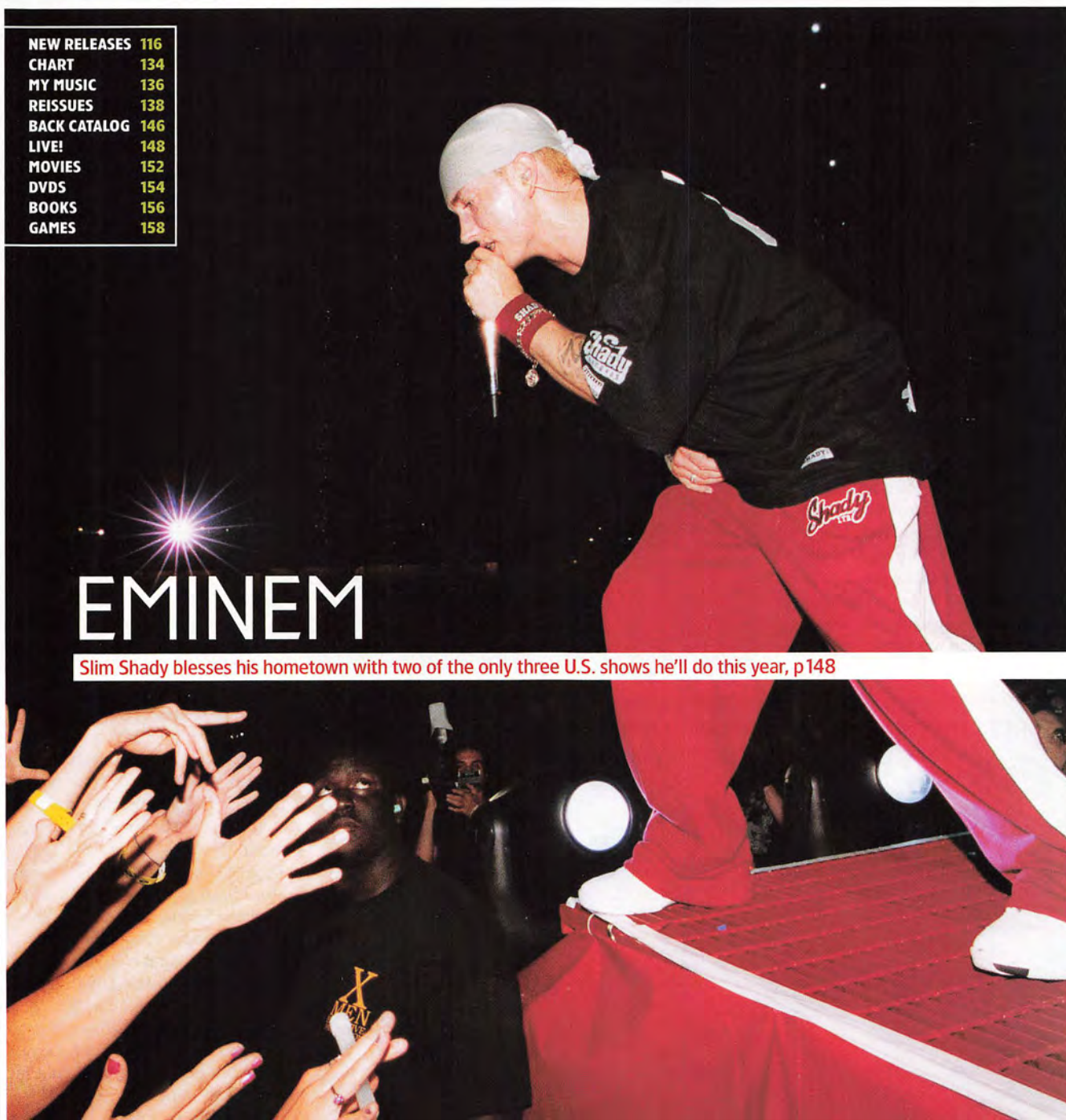


THEY MAKE 'EM. WE REVIEW 'EM >>

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EMINEM

Slim Shady blesses his hometown with two of the only three U.S. shows he'll do this year, p148



Spreading KY Jelly

Kentucky-loving sextet are the slightly dull regular fellas of rap's New South

 PLENTY OF RAPPERS make their listeners feel like spies, eavesdropping on an exciting world, hearing things they're not supposed to hear.

The Nappy Roots, on the other hand, make their listeners feel like tourists, hearing the lectures of six guides who never get tired of showing off their native Kentucky. And tourists love local color, so the Nappy Roots lay it on thick, pointing out favorite local sights: On your left, you'll see "a hoochie and some coochie cutters." The more they rhyme about being country, the more it seems they're just trying to entertain the out-of-towners.

And why not? The Nappy Roots make pretty good guides, and they seem to know their turf well enough. Last year, they called their major-label debut *Watermelon*, *Chicken & Gritz*, a provocative title that might have started a few fights if a less good-natured group had used it. But the album made it clear that the Nappy Roots weren't particularly interested in exploring black stereotypes — they just like to eat.

Watermelon was an unexpected success, with sales over a million,

NAPPY ROOTS WOODEN LEATHER

★★★

ATLANTIC

thanks to a pair of hits: the greasy, organ-driven "Awnaw" and the bluesy ballad "Po' Folks," both of which played up the group's Kentucky cred — in nearly every verse of each song, they remind you, yes, how "country" they are.

Their new album, *Wooden Leather*, follows pretty much the same formula as the earlier one — again, why not? Like Juvenile and Nelly and Outkast before them, the Nappy Roots (Skinny DeVille, B. Stille, Ron Clutch, Big V, R. Prophet and Scales) have figured out that half-sung lyrics and funny

accents add up to memorable choruses. James "Groove" Chambers, who produced most of *Watermelon*, has been replaced by a roster of free agents, but he seems to have left his blueprint behind — once again, most of the songs are based on rubbery beats embellished with a few live instruments.

"Nappy Holiday," produced by Mississippi's one-man gang David Banner, gives the guys a chance to brag about how the governor of Kentucky honored them by proclaiming September 16 "Nappy Roots Day." Over Banner's beat — a sped-up, spaced-out version of the Bee Gees' late-'60s flower-power hit "Holiday" — the Roots promise to "keep it Nappy." If they have any qualms about being the kind of rappers even an elected official can love, they don't let on.

The first half of the disc is mainly given over to Southern schtick, some of which feels distinctly secondhand. Last time, they celebrated Kentucky's car culture with "My Ride"; this time, they do it with a song called "Lac Dogs & Hogs." The world they rap about is an appealing cartoon, but it's a cartoon nonetheless, and this album includes a few reruns.

On the second half, they broaden their horizons, with mixed results. "War/Piece," another Banner production, weds vague sociopolitical commentary (in short: Sometimes things are good, and sometimes things are bad) to a squealing guitar that deserves to be



"Nah, Big V, we thought you were bringing the 'Weedwacker'."

THREE LANDMARK CDs OF SOUTHERN HIP-HOP Chosen by Big V →

GETO BOYS WE CAN'T BE STOPPED

RAP-A-LOT, 1991

★★★★

"This album gave us hope that you didn't need to be from the East to make it. This was the first time Southern voices had been heard. They were political and just screamed at you!"



OUTKAST ATLIENS

LA FACE/ARISTA, 1996

★★★★

"This proved that the South had staying power on the worldwide level. You can hear the desperation, the feeling. Dre and Big Boi are like pepperoni and sausage: You want both on your pizza!"



MASTER P GHETTO D

NO LIMIT, 1997

★★★★

"Master P was the man! 'Make Em Say Ugh' was an anthem, and it blew the Dirty South thing wide open. Beats by the pound, he really put it down. No Limit was all that in its prime!"





Nappy Roots, from left: Skinny DeVille, Scales, R. Prophet, B. Stille, Big V, Ron Clutch

barbecued and served for dinner. Then there's "Light & Dark," where guest Anthony Hamilton, who also sang on "Po' Folks," wails a gospel chorus while the rappers preach a mystical sermon.

All of this might be more satisfying if the group's lyrics were strong enough to turn caricatures into characters. Each rapper has a different flow, from Big V's gravelly moan to Skinny DeVille's rapid-fire free verse. But they're all long on boilerplate and short on punch lines, and it only gets worse when they turn serious. For all their reliance on schtick, the Nappy Roots come across as levelheaded, even-tempered fellows — good news for their friends and family,

no doubt, but not such good news for listeners. The sound owes a lot to Outkast and Goodie Mob, but their attitude has more in common with Bubba Sparxxx, another New Southerner who seems a bit too eager to please.

"Work in Progress," produced by alt-soul pioneer Raphael Saadiq, has a sturdy bass line and a sprightly guitar fillip, but the rappers smother the beat with a thick gravy of received wisdom: "In life, every step you take/Every right, every left you make/You can look at it like chess, in a way/'Cause life is

They're the kind of rappers even elected officials can love.



best when you take your time/ Don't make a move unless you done made up your mind." Can't we skip straight to dessert instead?

One of *Wooden Leather's* highlights is the bonus track, a club-friendly remix of "Roun' the Globe" featuring the Ying Yang Twins — two Atlanta loudmouths who specialize in novelty hits. There's not much to it, just a stripped-down beat and lots of bragging: The groups compete over who's more country, and although you already know the winner, it's fun to hear them fend off the competition. Forget about the tourists — for once, the Nappy Roots seem more concerned with impressing the folks back home. *KELEFA SANINEH*

311

EVOLVER ★★

VOLCANO

"Experimental" seventh album from Omaha rap-rockers falls as flat as... well, Omaha

311 call their latest outing a musical departure, but you'll be hard-pressed to find much evolving here: There's the same metal guitar crunch, the same quasi-reggae, the same indistinguishable rapping they've minted since their 3 million-selling, self-titled 1995 breakthrough. The titular nod to the Beatles here is justified, barely, by the

THE SCORE >>

★★★★★

EXCELLENT. A MUST-HAVE

★★★★

GREAT. CHECK IT OUT

★★★

VERY GOOD IN ITS GENRE

★★

JUST OK

★

WEAK

trippy *Magical Mystery Tour* vibe of "Sometimes Jacks Rule the Realm" and the "Strawberry Fields"-style Mellotron on "Seems Uncertain," a meditation on post-September 11 insecurity that gets no more profound than to proclaim, "Your denomination should be a private thing." Elsewhere, Nick Hexum sings, "It's one thing to make the same mistake twice/Another thing to make it all of your life." Too bad they didn't take their own advice to heart.

JOSH EELLS

ADEMA

UNSTABLE ★★★

ARISTA

California five-piece cleans up its act in a doomed attempt to stay relevant

Now that nü-metal is as fashionable as flannel, even former arena bands like Korn and Papa Roach are feeling the sales sting. So what does second-tier group Adema do to stay valid? They become more radio-friendly by turbo-boosting their melodies, and retain their tough exterior by writing about such angsty things as damaged relationships ("Unstable") and drugs ("Needles"). The lunging, harmony-laden "Co-Dependent" shows promise, but most of the songs on *Unstable*, the band's second album, are so labored over that they lack urgency. "Promises" echoes



Guess which member of Adema will be performing in a cast this evening.

with out-of-place U2-style guitar chimes, and "So Fortunate" is a mess of ringing arpeggios and weepy violins. Frontman Marky Chavez says Adema worked long and hard on *Unstable*. If they had spent half as much time, it might have been twice as good.

JON WIEDERHORN

A STATIC LULLABY

... AND DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE ★★★

FERRET/COLUMBIA

California punks debut screamo sing-alongs — Chloraseptic not included

The lullabies this Orange County five-some heard as kids must've given them

bad dreams. Amidst gales of guitar in "Nightmares Win 6-0," singer-screamer Joe Brown spews random imagery seemingly dredged from his unconscious, as if he's still spooked by monsters beneath the bed. More vulnerable than he is angry, Brown begs for — rather than demands — attention. On "Love to Hate, Hate to Me" and "A Sip of Wine Chased With Cyanide," he shreds his throat recounting growing pains, then rides hopeful, melodic choruses as though he's chugging chilled Robitussin. Likewise, his bandmates barrel from near-chaos into open, anthemic expanses, dragging hooks along with them. It's like they're snapping out of a fitful sleep, overjoyed to find themselves alive and well.

NICK CATUCCI

FRANK BLACK AND THE CATHOLICS

SHOW ME YOUR TEARS ★★★

SPINART

Hard-boiled roots-rock on the ninth (!) album from former Pixies frontman

A dozen years removed from his alternative-pioneer days, Frank Black is just another oddball tunesmith. Recording live with his steady backing band as well as former Pixies bandmate Joey Santiago and guest eccentrics Van

CLASS CLOWNS

California quartet faces the "one-hit wonder" tag

ALIEN ANT FARM

TRUANT ★★

DREAMWORKS

>> TWO YEARS AGO, Alien Ant Farm almost made Michael Jackson cool again, moonwalking onto the charts with a high-revved cover of Jacko's late-'80s hit "Smooth Criminal." They owe their record deal to Papa Roach, but these four Southern Californians have more in common with Sugar Ray on the puppy-dog fringe of the modern-rock spectrum: They're pop scavengers not averse to trying anything once.

truANT, an album with a title nearly as clever as that of its million-selling predecessor, *Anthology*, is AAF's modest bid to become at least two-hit wonders. Hiring as producers Robert and Dean DeLeo, the semi-anonymous riffmasters in Stone Temple Pilots, makes sense: The DeLeos have made a career of highlighting hooks. With its south-of-the-border horns, "Tia Lupe" has a Latin feel Ricky Martin might covet. "Never Meant" rides a reggae groove so

breezy it even has wind chimes. And "Glow" bounces despite its unplugged format: acoustic guitar, hand claps and percussion that swings rather than sledgehammers. AAF are much less successful when they strap on the Bigfoot guitars and throw their 98-pound weight around ("S.S. Recognize," "Drifting Apart," "Goodbye").

Singer Dryden Mitchell comes off as a noodle-soft Everyman, the kind of guy who empathizes with his girlfriend because "she don't like a life with a rock & roll singer." In "Hope," he aims for some "Billie Jean"-style pop paranoia but doesn't have the personality to pull it off. Over acoustic guitars and swooning strings, he croons that "someone I thought was a friend to me has gone and married my wife." Alien Ant Farm's songs may be catchy, but their wishy-washy personality makes it hard to care. GREG KOT

DRYDEN MITCHELL'S CURRENT LISTENING

>> ROBINELLA AND THE CCSTRINGBAND
ROBINELLA AND THE CCSTRINGBAND
COLUMBIA

>> SPIDERWORKS
SHIVER SELF-RELEASED



Held back again at Angus Young Junior High

Dyke Parks and Stan Ridgway (himself forever known for one big thing, Wall of Voodoo's '80s MTV fave "Mexican Radio"), Black remains obsessed with death, romance and religion. But now his approach is basically straightforward, with an emphasis on six-string duels (the snaky Leonard Cohen mimic "This Old Heartache," the addled solo on "Nadine") and not-quite-country (the pedal-steel ache of "Goodbye Lorraine," the swinging "Horrible Day"). Important? No. Remarkable? Not really. But at least Black is neither in the shadow of nor looking to recapture his past glories.

JASON COHEN

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB

TAKE THEM ON, ON YOUR OWN

★★★

VIRGIN

Blasé Los Angeles retro-rock trio coughs up ho-hum second album

"I'm in love without you," Robert Turner repeats on "We're All in Love," wafting in a druggy guitar haze. Nailing a non-committal, anesthetized cool, the BRMC frontman never gives himself entirely. He's a kid looking for a cause, but he's skeptical, too ("I'm looking for something to shout/Something I know I cannot doubt"), so he contradicts himself, plays with words and twists aphorisms into knots. Half the time this works; elsewhere he comes off as fumbling, if not masturbatory. Sometimes it's moot, when he's buried in the wall-of-sound scuzz that muffles even the most barbed riffs here. Throughout, the dark spaciousness that boosted BRMC's uneven 2001 debut is replaced with garage-rock fist-pumpers, which are all catchy but cramped. They've lost the knack for the former: The down-tempo "Shade of Blue" has one beautiful moment where moody plodding gives way to cathartic ribbons of guitar, but then gets back to rambling.

JONAH WEINER

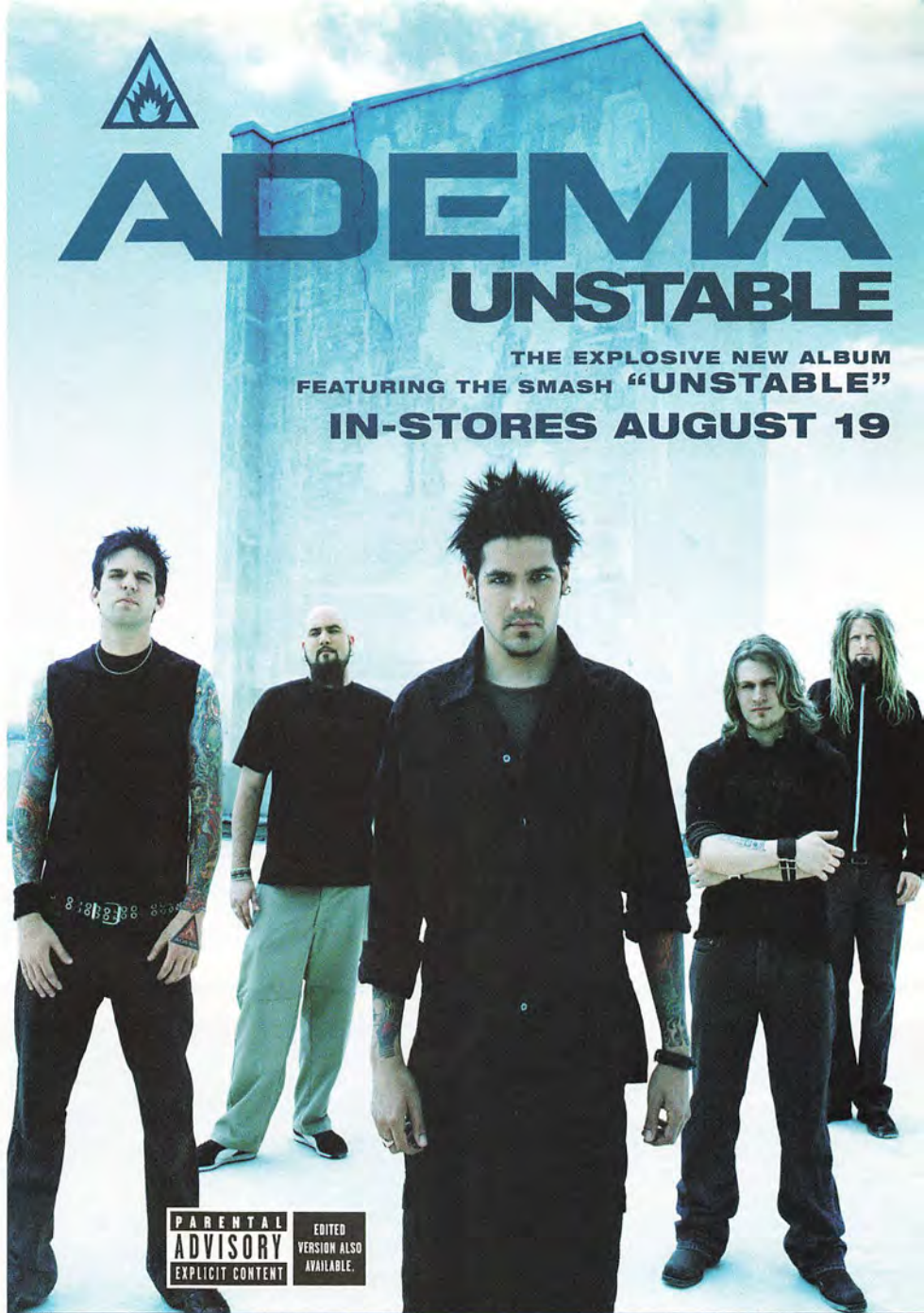
BRITISH SEA POWER

THE DECLINE OF BRITISH SEA POWER ★★★

ROUGH TRADE

The Flaming Lips love this U.K. four-piece. Now it's your turn

What would rock & roll sound like if it had been invented by Czech partisans during World War II? Probably a lot like British Sea Power. This excellent debut has the stoic European fatalism of Joy Division and the Pixies' beautiful insanity, plus riffs that soar so high, they aspire to genuine heroism. It's all sung with the last-chance intensity of a pilot sending his last message from the cockpit of a crashing Spitfire. Alluding to a host of themes rarely heard in rock — history as man's teacher, personal



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TOO LAID BACK

Hip-pop princess answers haters by ignoring them

ASHANTI

CHAPTER II

MURDER INC./DEF JAM

ASHANTI'S MULTIPLATINUM self-titled 2002 debut didn't announce the arrival of an important new voice in R&B so much as replicate the superficialities of Mary J. Blige. Capably co-opting Blige's vocal phrasing over recycled hip-hop-tested samples, the 22-year-old Long Island product served up frothy hits that captured around-the-way-girl sass sans genuine emotion.

Ashanti-directed haterade spread nearly as rapidly as her success. As her once hit-laden record label, Murder Inc., has gone cold, Inc. nemesis 50 Cent mocks her on mix tapes — likening her facial features to those of Eddie Munster. Meanwhile, curvier R&B divas with noticeably stronger pipes (such as Beyoncé) have already begun displacing her in the public eye.

Ashanti acknowledges none of this furor on *Chapter II*, a startlingly generic

effort that resuscitates her derivative formulas with robotic routine. Once again, she delivers color-by-number portraits of affairs of the heart ("Breakup 2 Makeup"), sings monotonous melodies over samples made famous by your favorite rappers ("Rain on Me," "Feel So Good") and deploys her favorite four-letter word ("Rock Wit U [Awww Baby]," "Sweet Baby").

Though it's tempting to blame the lifeless terrain on the absence of another silly-but-catchy Ja Rule duet, the greater loss may be Inc. producer 7 Aurelius, who provided past bubble-gum hits with snappier flavor. As rapper Chink Santana grows on "Shany's World," "[This album] is a place where it's just so beautiful that don't nuthin' matter." Beauty never sounded so bland. *CHAIRMAN MAO*

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ANTHOLOGY CAPITOL



> Ashanti resuscitates her derivative formula.



L I M I T E D E D I T I O N



30TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

courage, the elemental power of the sea and more — British Sea Power's vision makes most independent rock seem callow and weak-minded. In Britain, BSP's passion, literate worldview and fervent following have led to comparisons with the Smiths. A conquest of college-land could follow.

ANDREW HARRISON

BROADCAST

HAHA SOUND ★★★★★

WARP

Wheezy, scary psychedelic pop from '60s-inspired Brit weirdos

Famed in certain circles as the first guitar band to sign to hip British techno label Warp (home to Aphex Twin), the Birmingham trio Broadcast has carved a suitably recherché niche for itself since coming together in the mid-'90s. Like Stereolab, whose label, Duophonic Super 45s, released Broadcast's early singles, the band offers an icy and mysterious sound, equal parts avant-garde electronica, '60s spy-thriller soundtrack and kitschy psychedelic pop. Unlike Stereolab, they don't seem to regard writing actual songs as a hateful bourgeois conceit. The results are brooding songs that occasionally

resemble sinister nursery rhymes. Sung in the schoolgirlish English tones of vocalist Trish Keenan, they're never anything less than enthralling.

JAMES SLAUGHTER

STEVE BURNS

SONGS FOR DUSTMITES ★★★★★

PIAS

Retired kiddie-show host gets a tuneful clue on debut album

Steve Burns, the wide-eyed former host of Nickelodeon's pre-K show *Blue's*

Clues, delivers a more sophisticated version of show-and-tell on this modest yet elaborate collection of songs about romance and technology. Flaming Lips drummer Steven Drozd adds dense layers of strings, percussion and electronics to "Mighty Little Man," "A Sniveling Mess" and the title track, which dress up little-Steve-versus-big-bad-world notions in bright sonic armor. More than "just a boring example of everybody else," as he sings in "What I Do on a Saturday," Burns combines tuneful nerd-rock with big-science

smarts in "Superstrings" and "Troposphere." He's an unusual popster who sees science and technology not as the enemy but as metaphors for fascinating emotional states.

RICHARD GEHR

C-RAYZ WALZ

RAVIPOPS ★★★★★

DEFINITIVE JUX

South Bronx underground favorite balances drama with comedy on third album

For C-Rayz Walz, a sense of humor is as crucial as a

sense of purpose: *Ravipops* juggles cockiness, punch lines ("I'm so smooth I could play hopscotch on crutches") and polemics (see the blast of Native American rage on "Dead Buffaloes"). Calling himself "the Sun Cycle MC," the 27-year-old eccentric underground hype — who performs year-round wearing a fur-lined parka — shifts from light-hearted boasts to darker subjects as his album progresses. "His life was a gift to be rapped," he exclaims on "3 Card Molly," a graphic tribute to his murdered brother that builds into a stirring clamor of scuzzy guitars and gospel-like organ riffs. For just a moment, at the song's start, he falls off



British Sea Power and their manager, Mr. Owl

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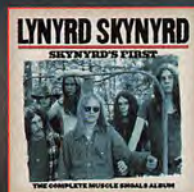
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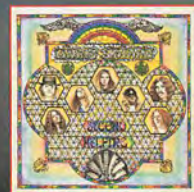
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the beat: "That breath was... the last... one..." he stammers. Never has the sound of a battle rhymer choking been so touching.

G. BEATO

RODNEY CROWELL

FATE'S RIGHT HAND ★★

DI/MZ/COLUMBIA

Accomplished country songwriter turns Nashville grown-up and gritty

"I don't understand at all," Rodney Crowell claims on the title track, but he spends much of his eleventh album proving otherwise, with what amounts to a front-porch State of the Union. The veteran songwriter established his reputation by dissecting marital life with sharp-honed honesty, but here, he sings about the homeless without sap or condescension, flouts country's jingoistic party line and (most surprisingly) pulls off a rhapsodic litany of cultural watchwords without it sounding like Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire." Sometimes discouraged but never sluggish, with the usual Nashville gloss sanded to a fine grit, it's a backhandedly optimistic testament to idealism, soul-searching and fixing today's problems instead of obsessing on the past.

JOHN DEFORE

THE DECEMBERISTS

HER MAJESTY ★★

KILL ROCK STARS

Overeducated Anglophiles march forth with clever, unbearably irritating album

In his early years, even Bob Dylan's nasal droning proved an acquired taste. So there's hope for the Decemberists, a smarty-pants pop quintet from Portland, Oregon, whose second album staggers under the unbearable preciousness of donkey-voiced singer Colin Meloy. Like a high-school freshman reciting Monty Python, Meloy can't resist upstaging his own beautiful songs ("As I Rise," "The Bachelor and the Bride") with a mincing "Penny Lane" whomp on "Billy Liar" or the cutesy novelty of "Song for Myla Goldberg," about the author of the recent best-seller *Bee Season*. More regrettably, Meloy's eerie vocal resemblance to Arnold Horshack from *Weicome Back*, Kotter won't win any much-needed points from the Belle & Sebastian set.

TODD PRUZAN

DEREK TRUCKS BAND

SOUL SERENADE ★

COLUMBIA

Nephew of Allman Brothers drummer inherits southern blues, puts it to sleep

Atlanta-raised Derek Trucks is 23, but he makes the kind of music that's

beloved by men three times his age: meandering jazz-rock that's led by his endlessly virtuosic — i.e., irritatingly twiddly — guitar solos, which likely sound much better under the influence of strong narcotics. His second album takes in innocuous improvisatory "work-outs" that tend to go on for what feels like decades, as he repeatedly attempts

the utterly terrifying rehabilitation of a solo on the flute, an instrument that should be banned from rock. Relief of a sort comes with "Drown in My Own Tears," a fairly incisive blues featuring southern-rock king Gregg Allman — but this tedious record makes Pat Metheny look like a punk rocker by comparison.

JOHN HARRIS



"If someone asks me 'What's the 411?' one more time..."

DRAMA QUEEN

The queen of hip-hop soul comes full circle

MARY J. BLIGE

LOVE & LIFE ★★

MCA

WHEN MARY J. BLIGE and Sean "P. Diddy" Combs got together, they changed music. Their 1992 collaboration, *What's the 411?*, along with *My Life* (1994), laid the foundation for "hip-hop soul" — booming beats, lush instrumentation, hard, street-savvy wailing — spawning Ashanti, Beyoncé, Monica and other uni-monikered sirens. Now, after spending her last three albums showcasing artistic growth and maturity, Blige has returned to her hip-hop roots.

Love & Life is an SUV-rattling, summer-loving affair. Combs — who has never met an old hit he couldn't jack — packs the songs with familiar breakbeats and recognizable soul loops. Practically every song sounds as though we've heard it before — because, well, we have. Blige sounds even more comfortable over tracks made famous by A Tribe Called Quest and DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince than she did on Elton John's "Bennie and the Jets."

Her vocal turns — raw, reaching, take-no-shit — fit the sonic environ-

ment, riding beats like the top MCs. On "Let Me Be the 1," when 50 Cent declares, "If I was locked up, I know you'd be the one to come see me/Because you understand life where we from ain't easy," his words ring true. The other guest rappers — Jay-Z, Method Man, Eve (on Dr. Dre's simple, straitlaced "Not Today") — lavish her with top-notch tribute, not the usual throwaway verses.

Unlike Blige's past efforts, there's no defining theme to *Love & Life*; the continuity is in the music. Blige still defines herself through relationships with men. But here, she assumes the role of the protector and the protected, vacillating between throwing herself at the feet of a wanted lover ("I'll cook and clean/I'll make you happy," she promises on "Ooh") and dismissing the unappreciative man-whore who walks into "It's a Wrap" smelling like another woman. Mary J's life and loves may be as confusing as everyone else's, but they sound much better. *KRS* **EX**

MARY J. BLIGE'S CURRENT LISTENING

» FLOETRY FLOETICS DREAMWORKS

» MONICA AFTER THE STORM J RECORDS

BÉLA FLECK AND THE FLECKTONES

LITTLE WORLDS ★★

COLUMBIA

Grammy-winning banjo picker offers the year's best "drumitar" record!

Kind of a *Tales of Topographic Oceans* for fans of bluegrass-jazz fusion, *Little Worlds* packs an orgy of fancy picking into three CDs. And once you get past superfluous solos and predictable collaborations (jazzbo Branford Marsalis, the Chieftains, bluegrass phenoms Nickel Creek), there's still plenty of effervescent interplay among the often electrified banjoist Béla Fleck and bandmates Victor Wooten (bass), Jeff Coffin (sax) and Future Man (on, uh, "synth-axe drumitar"). The Flecktones display playful intelligence and a casual international flair on this carefully sequenced more-is-more adventure, which kicks off with the modern mountain music of "Bill Mon" and ends, hours later, in the extended multiculti stratospherics of "Sleeper" and "The Last Jam."

RICHARD GEHR

MICHAEL FRANTI AND SPEARHEAD

EVERYONE DESERVES MUSIC ★★

ARTISTDIRECT

Tree-hugging San Francisco rapper fights war with rhymes

Despite his charismatic wit and inclusive politics, San Francisco agit-rapper-singer Michael Franti polarizes hip-hop audiences: On one hand are his fiery verses and musical gumbo; on the other, he sports soft, goody-two-shoes raps and a jam-happy band. Here, on his fourth album, both sides are alive and well, but against the backdrop of war, Franti's bumper-sticker rhymes feel more urgent, inspired and defiant than ever. "We can bomb the world in pieces, but we can't bomb the world into peace," he croons on "Bomb the World," while he and Blackalicious's Gift of Gab declare war (nonviolent, naturally) on war with the skittering "We Don't Stop." The pie-in-the-sky ambitions may be a little much, but credit Franti for dreaming up a kinder, gentler new world order.

HUA HSU

FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS

WELCOME TO POPPY'S ★★

DI/FONTAINE/SANCTUARY

NYC trio has now made itself the third-best white group in rap

This New York trio debuted in 1995, reimagining the Beastie Boys as friendly black-leather bon vivants rather than

aloof scenesters. Aside from a super hit single, "Scooby Snacks," FLC never delivered fully on their grinning promise of making white rap irresistible — until now. On their juicy third album, lead singer Huey still whispers his smoother NY-Euro version of Eminem's phlegmy style. But FLC's arrangements now power on and groove and vamp with a hardy, offhand magnificence. From rock-blues ("Running for Cover") to hooky hard pop ("Stray Bullet") to tingling balladry and R&B ("Beautiful," "Friday Night"), FLC sustain one helluva flow.

JAMES HUNTER

AMY GRANT

SIMPLE THINGS ★

A&M

Christian-music pinup's return to pop is so dull, it's a sin

Amy Grant is a double threat, having racked up an impressive array of Dove Awards for her gospel music and Grammys for her pop hits, including the adoring 1991 smash "Baby Baby." She returns to secular themes on *Simple Things*, which lacks spirit in more ways than one. It's a sonic snooze, a bland and tiresome batch of mid-tempo ballads distinguished only by "Beautiful," a limpid ballad with her hubby, Vince Gill. With lyrics about devotion, forgiveness, redemption and other lofty virtues, the CD should have been titled *Sappy Things*. There's only one overtly religious reference here — Grant name-checks her "heavenly Father" on "Innocence Lost." But it still ends up sounding more pious than passionate.

DAVID HILTBAND

GUIDED BY VOICES

EARTHQUAKE GLUE ★★

MATADOR

Ohio indie band's umpteenth album offers snippets of something big

Since 1986, GBV frontman Robert Pollard has dragged '60s Britpop into a Dayton, Ohio, basement. Excessively prolific and easily distracted, he's written song snippets that hold his own interest for less than a minute. It's a small coup, then, that all the tunes on his quintet's latest album, their second since a 1999–2001 major-label sortie, run nearly two minutes or more. "Beat Your Wings" and "The Main Street Wizards" run rock-opera gambits (ascending riffs, symphonic drum fills, stark acoustic guitar) without exploding into full-on *Tommy* mode, and friction between indie-rock simplicity and art-rock bombast sparks a half-dozen stirring rockers. But the offhand charm isn't enough. Although Pollard employs the bold strokes of rock's old masters, fundamentally he's a quick-sketch artist.

MARK JENKINS



Guided by Voices: "I told you we shouldn't have toured with R. Kelly."

HAMELL ON TRIAL

TOUGH LOVE ★★

RIGHTTEOUS BABE

Bald songwriter tackles the big subjects from a lowlife perspective

Hamell on Trial is Syracuse, New York-raised Ed Hamell, who led a bunch of bands before going solo and acoustic after a benefit concert one-off. No folk-punk or antifolkie plays harder or louder. His debut on the label of fellow traveler Ani DiFranco, featuring a neat alt-celeb studio band, isn't as undeniable as 2000's self-released, story-filled *Choochtown*. But Hamell hasn't lost his knack for describing true crime and evoking existential outrage. Love and mortality also interest him, sometimes in tandem — "When Destiny Calls," which mixes coke dealing with child rearing, or "Tough Love," about a sociopathic couple bringing their hots to your town. But on the whole, Hamell sides with God, who gets the lead role in the tone-setting "Don't Kill."

ROBERT CHRISTGAU



Joe Henry's least-favorite part-time job? Testing whoopee cushions.

JOE HENRY

TINY VOICES ★★

ANTI-EPITAPH

More beautifully fractured fictions from jazz-inflected songwriter-producer

It may have taken Joe Henry a while to find a sound that avoids the dreaded singer-songwriter ghetto, but since 1996's *Trampoline* he has been refining something all his own — a densely layered, darkly shimmering sound that's part late-night jazz, part avant-garde chamber pop. *Tiny Voices* sucks the listener into fragments of weird fiction, such as a tale of a maid's kid fighting off molestation ("This Afternoon"), and pictures of emotions potent enough to leave a bruise ("Flesh and Blood"). Most tracks are less song than atmosphere, with Henry's seductively raspy voice competing with A-list improvisers like clarinetist Don Byron. But the record's instrumental voices always gel — if not into a groove, then as a roomful of smoke revealing just as much of the story as the lyricist wants to show.

JOHN DEFORE

JAVIER

JAVIER ★★

CAPITOL

Soul prodigy's enthusiasm for Stevie Wonder verges on stalkerdom

In 1968, Stevie Wonder released an album using the rather transparent pseudonym Eivets Rednow. At several points during this debut from 25-year-old Javier Colon, raised in Stratford, Connecticut, listeners might suspect that Stevie's up to his old hijinks again. Javier's shameless larynx-cloning and sizeable debt to the canon of 1970s soul, however well-executed, threaten to confine him to the already overstuffed neosoul niche. "She Spoke to

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

JOE HENRY was a classmate of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. "He always walked on the balls of his feet," Henry recalls. Creepy!

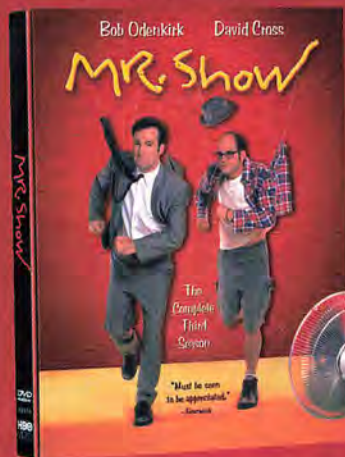
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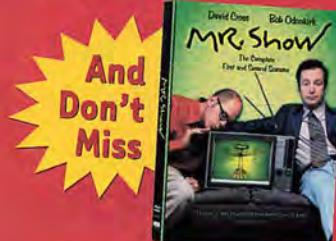
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➤ June Carter Cash was country's queen mother.

NOT FORGOTTEN

Country music's royal consort creates her own legacy

JUNE CARTER CASH

WILDWOOD FLOWER

★★★★

DUALTONE

➤➤ SOME RECORDS COME complete with a haunting. On June Carter Cash's unexpectedly posthumous *Wildwood Flower*, the visitation is particularly poignant. The wife of Johnny Cash died suddenly in May, ending an old-fashioned marriage that was also a modern partnership. It's impossible to listen to this eerily commemorative disc without morbidity waxing up your ears. But get past its sad surprise epilogue, and you'll find a warmly intimate record of a life lived in artistic community.

As a descendant of country music's founding clan, the Carter Family, Carter Cash preserved a legacy greater than the one she created with her husband. *Wildwood Flower* captures her distinctly girlish approach to the matriarch role. It contains eight songs made famous by the Carter Family. Other singers — especially Johnny but also daughters, granddaughters, cousins and nephews — feature prominently. The production, by Carter Cash's son John, offers archival and contemporary spoken interludes that assert

Carter Cash's role as country's queen mother without downplaying her sassiness. Her ragged, spry voice turns these classic songs into family dinner-table tales.

The stories can be disconcerting. Her 1965 saga "Road to Kaintuck" offers a pre-Civil Rights portrait of wild-eyed "Injuns." The beautifully lilting hymn "Anchored in Love" is one of several unwaveringly Christian cuts. A listener whose homeboy is not Jesus might grow itchy at the religiosity. But Carter Cash was not pious, as proved by such charmingly unholy tracks as the murder ballad "Big Yellow Peaches" and "Temptation," a sexy septuagenarian duet with Johnny.

Given the sad aftermath of these sessions, listening to this music feels discomfiting, like eavesdropping on a memorial service. Yet Carter Cash lived her entire life in the space between public and private. Born into country music's mythic America, she used her talent to translate her joy and pain into a story bigger than herself. ANN POWERS

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE!

➤➤ IRIS DEMENT
INFAMOUS ANGEL WARNER BROS.

➤➤ DOLLY PARTON
ULTIMATE DOLLY PARTON RCA

Me," though, moves with a flamboyant Latin sway, while "She'll Never Know" adds a little grit to the lyrical syrup with its tale of an interracial romance under fire. Wean him off his no doubt played-to-death copy of *Innervisions*, and Javier might amount to something more than a tribute act.

DORIAN LYNSEY

JS

ICE CREAM ★★★

DREAMWORKS

R. Kelly launches kittenish R&B protégées. Surprise: They're over-aged!

Kim and Kandy Johnson aren't the type to reel, inconsolable, after they've caught a lover cheating — they're the type to take him to court. "You get the car, boy, and I get the house," they sing with disarming sweetness on "Half," which could be the divorce jam of the year. At 22 and 24, the sisters are cool-headed and self-possessed. Their soft voices recall Aaliyah or Monica: sultry, studio-slick, but unadorned with hammy melisma. Mentor R. Kelly produces eight tracks, under the giddily tactless moniker the Pied Piper. They're down-tempo, sensual songs, with just enough backbeat to keep heads nodding. The highlight is the title track: a pileup of ice cream innuendos, not thinly veiled so much as ass-naked: "Come and try my coconut; it's gonna blow your mind." Tom Carvel is spinning in his grave!

JONAH WEINER

KING GORDY

THE ENTITY ★★★

WEB

Eminem's gore-obsessed homeboy makes impressive horrorcore debut

King Gordy doesn't look a thing like Eminem. He's black, well over 200 pounds and likes to twist his hair into devil's horns. But he comes closer than any rapper to sounding like the real Slim Shady: His jokes are inappropriate ("I got full-blown AIDS from fucking JonBenet"); he swings between gory threats, suicidal episodes and comical self-pity ("I got a Cutlass on 20s/Nobody rides with me"); and he fills confessionals with cracked sadomasochism. On his debut, which features Obie Trice, D12's Bizarre and production from Em himself, Gordy gets impressive mileage out of his gruff baritone — on "The Pain," his bellow morphs into giggles and sobs, elaborately tunneled with internal rhyme, and he unleashes an unrappery, bluesy growl on "Pass Me a Lighter." Gordy's nihilism isn't always clever, but it



Nick Lachey thanks God for his hot wife.

does match the dark absurdity of these metal-inflected grinds.

JONAH WEINER

NICK LACHEY

SOULO ★★

UNIVERSAL

Jessica Simpson's husband goes out on his own

After six successful years of cheesy harmonizing in America's third-favorite boy band, Nick Lachey has left 98 Degrees for that rocky road toward musical maturity. The dreadfully titled *Soulo* (he is both solo and soulful, see?) is produced by the teams behind Michael Jackson and Avril Lavigne but suffers greatly under the weight of wind-swept love songs that recall not George Michael, which would be fine, but '80s balladeer Richard Marx. "You're the Only Place," for example, might just be the most over-earnest smoocher of all time. Occasionally, he does find a pulse — "Shut Up" is slick and rhythmic — but the gap between Lachey and, say, Justin Timberlake remains as vast as the Atlantic Ocean.

NICK DUERDEN



JS: Nice seats!

BEN LEE

HEY YOU. YES YOU ★★★

F2 MUSIC

Aussie indie-rockers enlist a hip-hop Gorilla to help him expose the angst Down Under

Ten years ago, Ben Lee was the original Conor Oberst, a precocious, hobbit-like singer-songwriter wowing music scene-sters and dating famous actresses before he was old enough to drive. Now, older and wiser at 24, he wants to tell us about it. Lee sets the tone with "Running With Scissors," a breathless opening track about — what else? — the dangers of youth, then gets more personal from there. Meanwhile, producer Dan "The Automator" Nakamura (of Gorillaz fame) lends a bit of trip-hop chill, shuffling programmed beats and echoing harmonies over a low end so deep Jacques Cousteau could get lost. It all adds up to something dark and spooky, yet not entirely unpleasant — like a warm bath at the bottom of a wishing well.

JOSH EELLS

MICHELLE MALONE

STOMPIN' GROUND ★★★

DAEMON/SEB

Southern rock veteran needs a bit more nicotine in her diet

The apostrophe in her moniker gives it away: Moanin' Michelle Malone really wants to be a high-tar blues belter. Sadly, her voice is just a shade too thin to pull off the Zep-in-the-Delta stomp of "Lafayette" or the soul-soaked "Moanin' Coat." The good news is that this likeable record ranges more widely than that, from the protest chugalong of "Flagpole" to the Dylan-esque "2 Horns and 2 Wings" to a few songs that evoke her fellow Atlantans (and college classmates) the Indigo Girls. At their best, though, Malone and her band recall no one so much as Rod Stewart fronting the Faces, and "Samsonite" and the joyous "Cry Me a River" roll like great lost '70s singles. Perfect hit material for Stewart, if he ever returns from singing show tunes.

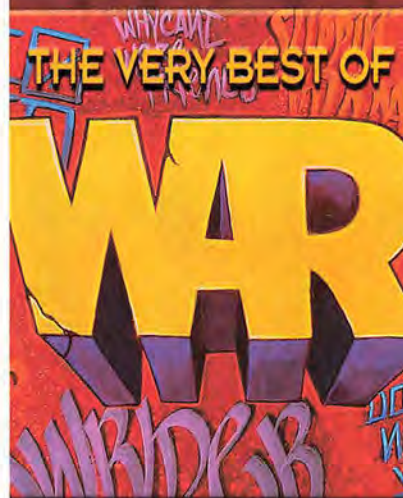
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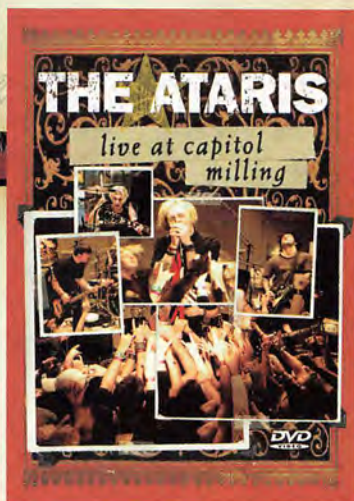


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IPECAC

Pedal-to-metal rock to be put beside Bill Wyman's solo albums



As the bass player in Queens of the Stone Age, Nick Oliveri is the bald beanpole with the King Tut goatee, bouncing off the walls in counterpoint to the stoic motor-rocking of Josh Homme. His own quartet, Mondo Generator, suffers a little in comparison to Queens. Oliveri needs a grounding element; without it, he just plays the Neanderthal wild-ass screamer, doing a spectrum of punk-to-Sabbath heavy music that seems even less deeply felt than QOTSA's (sample lyric: "Once I was alive/But not anymore/The Drano in my blood is eatin' my brain!"). On a few tracks, he switches to a more controlled singing style, but his muted side isn't very compelling, either.

BEN RATLIFF

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

As a gardening trick, MYSTIC insists on talking and singing to her houseplants. "It helps them grow," she explains.

ALLISON MOORER

SHOW ☆☆

UNIVERSAL SOUTH

'Bama-bred singer proves she's more Cher than country on first live release

Coming after only three studio albums, this live disc from thirtyish songwriter Allison Moorer invites the question: How soon is too soon to milk the fan base? These concert tracks, which are brasher than the originals though still played with twangy finesse, show how Moorer's broad, blustering voice owes more to Cher's least restrained moments than to Tammy Wynette or Loretta Lynn; her songs may be smarter than much CMT fare, but belted like this, they lose any shred of

subtlety. Fellow master of excess Kid Rock joins in for the show-closing "Bully Jones," a stripped-down number that's a breath of fresh air, considering the hour of slick soft rock and balladry that precedes it.

JOHN DEFORE

MY MORNING JACKET

IT STILL MOVES ☆☆☆☆

ATO/RCR

My my, hey hey, Neil Young-inspired Kentuckians are here to stay

You know those beautiful, mysterious photographs that turn out to be super-magnified shots of human skin or a fly's wing? My Morning Jacket's third album is a lot like that: burying ecstatic guitar and pleading vocals in thick reverb, it's like a blurry closeup of Neil Young's "Cowgirl in the Sand." You can't talk about

MMJ without mentioning Crosby, Stills & Nash's better quarter; Jim James's keening voice summons up the gray eminence every third bar, and Johnny Quaid has Young's '56 Les Paul sound down. Unlike their model, though, they favor mood over songcraft. "Dancefloors" is upbeat, but things are otherwise bleak: "Just don't make it last any longer than it has to," James begs, typically defeated, on "I Will Sing You Songs." At 72 minutes, the gorgeous gloom of *It Still Moves* lasts a bit longer than it has to — but it offers a host of tarnished gems along the way.

JEFF SALAMON

MYSTIC

CUTS FOR LUCK AND SCARS FOR FREEDOM... (LEARNING TO BREATHE) ☆☆☆

DREAMWORKS

Oakland's cool-rap sister improves on a good thing

Lauryn Hill had better finish the follow-up to *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*



My Morning Jacket: "Hey, it's my turn with the jacket!"



Rancid: Not a band that gets by on looks.

HAIR-RAISING

Punk-rock stalwarts have never sounded happier

RANCID

INDESTRUCTIBLE ★★★★★

WARNER BROS.

▶ THEY DROP THE bomb right at the start: "Lay back, rock & roll, come inside me," singer Tim Armstrong caterwauls on "Indestructible." Even before he invokes Joe Strummer, the spirit of punk-rock past, in the same song, you know this is a great punk record, a great rock record — just a great record. West Coast true believers who loved ska, Brit accents and mohawks, Rancid came from the same Bay Area scene as Green Day but never played punk for laughs. Six albums on, Rancid seem as permanent as uranium.

Some punk bands sound savage. Rancid sound happy they found punk rock, which saved them from a life of dead-end jobs and assorted addictions. Drummer Brett Reed, bassist Matt Freedman and guitarist Lars Frederiksen can wail on two-tone ska all night, but here the emphasis is on rave-ups and ringing guitars. What's striking this time is all the songs about death.

"Django" grabs an image from an insanely great spaghetti western of

the same name — a man dragging a casket across a barren landscape — and gallops across the same bleak desert, riding a twangy guitar. "Ghost Band" is an exhilarating dream about hearing ghosts playing Rancid songs.

Rancid find plenty of ways to bend punk's rules. For starters, they've signed with major label Warner Bros., a real indie no-no. "Roadblock" gloriously transforms a chorus from an ancient New Orleans rhythm-and-blues song; there's a roller-rink organ here and there, not to mention a great ballad about Armstrong getting arrested in Shanghai for protesting Chinese human-rights abuses.

Maybe the song that says the most is "Otherside." Two pals — an atheist and a believer — agree to disagree. The believer dies, and the atheist hears himself saying, "I'll see you on the other side." That's later: Right now, *Indestructible* shouts how glad Rancid are to be alive. **RJ SMITH**

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soon, because Mystic's *Cuts for Luck* could send her back to school. The Oakland, California, native's kick-back beats, dulcet voice and cosmic outlook might brand her a hip-hop hippie, but her rhymes are grounded by her gift for candor and a myth-free take on the inner city. If she comes off lighter than the former Fugee, it's because she ranks sensuality above morality, especially on the intense urban ballad "Neptune's Jewels" and the Dr. Dre-ishy paranoid "Ghetto Birds." Distribution problems have resulted in multiple releases of *Cuts*, the earliest in 2001, so Mystic has added several new tracks, including a convertible-ready West Coast anthem, "W," and a rational post-September 11 rap, "Here We Are," featuring her East Coast counterpart, Mos Def. The record gets better every time it comes out!

JAMES HANNAHAM

PRETTY GIRLS MAKE GRAVES

THE NEW ROMANCE ★★★

MATADOR

Second outing for tipped Seattleites named for a Smiths song



If Pretty Girls Make Graves moved an inch further into left field, they'd be just another excessively knotty cult prospect for whom one time signature is never enough. But amid the fidgety



Mystic regrets the day she bought the sweatsuit before trying it on first.

guitars and twitchy rhythms are enough hair-raising hooks to reach far beyond the counters of independent record stores. A good nine-tenths of their appeal resides in the form of Andrea Zollo, the most versatile, charismatic frontwoman this side of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O. Whether channeling the spiky dissatisfaction of English New Wave on the coiled, urgent rallying call "This Is Our Emergency" ("Shout out so I can hear you," she commands) or barking and yelping her way through the title track, Zollo ensures that her band's relentless contortions are a joy rather than a headache.

DORIAN LYNKEY

ROBERT RANDOLPH & THE FAMILY BAND

UNCLASSIFIABLE

★★★

DARE/WARNER BROS.

New Jersey pedal-steel maestro unleashes God-fearing debut studio set

Robert Randolph plays like a man possessed, channeling a Pentecostal frenzy through his incendiary "sacred steel" guitar. With his major-label debut, though, the House of God Church devotee

moves onto more secular ground. Eschewing his usual extended instrumentals and gospel standards, this set of 11 originals emphasizes compact songs heavily influenced by R&B, Stevie Ray Vaughan-style blues-rock and even hip-hop. Randolph does weave in righteous instrumental rave-ups here and there ("Stroke" and "Squeeze"), but the spiritual and universal-love themes here owe more to '70s Stevie Wonder than holy scripture.

JON MORTLAND

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

In the early '80s, before he started rapping, SIR MIX-A-LOT often drove call girls across the Canadian border in — what else — a gold-plated Cadillac. For money? "For fun!" he explains.

ROCK CITY

ROCK CITY ★★★

LUCKY SEVEN

Remnants of a long-gone cult hero, before he launched Big Star

Troubled power-pop legend Chris Bell left behind a slender legacy. After teaming with Alex Chilton on Big Star's 1972 fucked-up Beatlesque masterpiece *#1 Record*, the Memphis singer-songwriter went largely unheard until a fatal car accident six years later. *I Am the Cosmos*, a 1992 collection of heart-breaking demos, filled in a few blanks. This first issue of Bell's 1969-'70 work with Rock City, costarring future BS

drummer Jody Stephens, adds another chapter. While the three best songs — all later recycled by Big Star — feature Bell's sweet, sorrowful voice, others spotlight Thomas Dean Eubanks, a mediocre

shouter who ranges from dumb psychedelia ("Climb the walls of your mind") to somber romance. Confirming Eubanks' lunkhead status are two mid-'70s songs without Bell, where he mimics a T. Rex rave-up ("Oh Babe") and anticipates the Black Crowes' leaden R&B ("Try a Little Harder"). *Rock City* is a tantalizing footnote, but it's hardly essential.

JON YOUNG

BOY BEATS GIRL

Great Danes unleash a filthy-minded full-length debut

THE RAVEONETTES

CHAIN GANG OF LOVE ★★★

COLUMBIA

>> BEFORE THERE WAS rock, there was '50s teenybop, and its Napoleon was Phil Spector, with a great crashing sound that elevated the crises of adolescence — various shades of "should I put out?" — to the level of opera. Periodically, rock bands have remade Spector with sawtooth guitars — the Raveonettes, a boy/girl Danish duo, are the latest in a line that includes the Ramones and droning '80s Scottish quartet the Jesus & Mary Chain.

The Raveonettes — Sune Rose Wagner and Sharin Foo to their moms — owe their biggest debt to the latter, but where the Mary Chain were glum and looked like things the cat coughed up, Wagner and Foo raise the excitement stakes by looking decorative and always sounding as though they're on the verge of having sex. "My girl is a little animal/She always wants to fuck,"

Wagner sings on "Little Animal," worried that you might miss the point.

Meanwhile, the pair are molested by tambourines and waves of ecstatic noise, and while there's a surfy edge to "Dirty Eyes (Sex Don't Sell)" and vintage Space Invader noises behind the pupil-dilating guitars of "The Great Love Sound," that's about it for variety. Simplicity is the mantra, and if *Chain Gang of Love* were a film, it would be a loop of that scene in *Pulp Fiction* when Uma Thurman goes to the bathroom for a big line of cocaine and Link Wray's "Rumble" kicks in thunderously loud.

Like the gaudy cover of a '50s pulp novel about delinquent teens (*Switchblade Prom*, perhaps), *Chain Gang of Love* promises racy thrills — and delivers them. TONY POWER

SUNE ROSE WAGNER'S CURRENT LISTENING

>> THE COOKIES THE COMPLETE COOKIES SEQUEL

>> A.R.E. WEAPONS A.R.E. WEAPONS ROUGH TRADE



The Raveonettes: Think White Stripes, only cuter.

MARK RONSON

HERE COMES THE FUZZ

★★★

ELEKTRA

Surprise! New York fashion-scene DJ's first collection doesn't suck

Cursed to have famous parents (Mom's an NYC socialite, and Dad played guitar with David Bowie), poor Mark Ronson gets antsy when people call him a "celebrity DJ." He combats such social prejudice by spinning at low-key functions — Playboy Lounge gatherings, the Notorious B.I.G.'s last birthday party, that kind of thing. But however mildly puke-inducing his scenester background might be, there's no denying that his debut is pretty special — it's banging, disco-fied, party-hearty hip-hop that takes today's sharp-edged R&B right back to the gliding strings and funk of the Sugarhill era. The rap glitterati (Ghostface Killah, Tweet, Mos Def, Q-Tip) crowd in for spirited cameos, and if there's a drawback, it's that this party's just so fabulous and self-satisfied, you know you'd never get past the door.

ANDREW HARRISON

JOSH ROUSE

1972 ★★★

RYKODISC

Fourth album from cult Nebraska singer-songwriter

Over the past five years, Nashville resident Josh Rouse has established himself as a fine chronicler of Elliott Smith-style melancholy. But now, after 2002's wonderful *Under Cold Blue Stars* comes his perkier album yet. Named for the year he was born, 1972 boasts, in "Love Vibration" and the Randy Newman-esque "Slaveship," songs so buoyant he sounds in love with life. It's nice to hear him smile, maybe, but Rouse remains best when scratching the surface of the human condition. "Flight Attendant" (its theme: Nobody loves me) is achingly poignant, his rasping voice full of pain, while "Sparrows Over Birmingham," featuring a male gospel choir, is spine-chillingly haunting the way only truly great sad songs are.

NICK DUERDEN

SEAL

SEAL IV ★★★★★

WARNER BROS.

First album in five years from slow-moving British electro hippie

There isn't a single moment on Seal's very-long-awaited fourth album as likely to send a chill down your spine as the "my power, my pleasure, my pain" line in his multiple Grammy-winning "A Kiss From a Rose," the theme from 1995's *Batman Forever*. But the London-born, Nigerian-Brazilian-Afro-Caribbean singer's hopeful meditations on love still offer long stretches of sublime pleasure. In a fair world, thousands of children would be conceived to the accompaniment of "Loneliest Star," with its gentle groove, inexpressibly sexy vocal and engaging melody. Both Marvin Gaye and Sam Cooke might have been proud of the gospel-inflected "Love's Divine." His long silences between albums notwithstanding, Seal remains one of the best half-dozen male pop singers drawing breath.

JOHN MENDELIS/JOHN

SIR MIX-A-LOT

DADDY'S HOME ★

RHYME CARTEL/INUSIC

Pointless comeback from hip-hop's most famous booty maestro

After a seven-year hiatus, Seattle's good-natured pimp veteran is back: off his ass, but by no means off the topic of asses. Mix will be forever associated with his 1992 hit "Baby Got Back," and on his self-produced sixth album, he does little to shake the novelty tag. "Nasty Girl," "Big Ho" and "Big Johnson" revisit his glory days — only now, he sounds like a dirty old man, more likely to make you feel uncomfortable instead of raunchy. Meanwhile, "Game Don't Get Old" and the bizarrely jam band-ish "Y'all Don't Know" offer unconvincing sermons on life's priorities. Mix's dinky, biteless beats are nearly as boring as his decade-old pimp tales and stodgy moralizing. Daddy may be home, but the kids were all right without him.

HUA HSU

THE STAR SPANGLES

BAZOOKA!!! ★★★★★

CAPITOL

Sparkling debut from New York's thrift-store punks

The Star Spangles are in love with the myth of rock & roll: living rough among squatters on New York's Lower East Side since they were 14, permanently sneering, with a ragged-yet-stylish, scruffed-up street look. Any resemblance to the Strokes is strictly coincidental. This is an

Smash Mouth: The chubby guy, and the three other guys



ANTI-STARS

Hooky quartet has never sounded more normal or unique

SMASH MOUTH

GET THE PICTURE ★★★★★

INTERSCOPE

HEY NOW, you're rock stars. So why don't we know what any of you look like? The funny and strange thing about Smash Mouth is how good they are at making stand-out records while leading lives that fade into the background.

Hailing from San Jose, California, they have done a marvelous job of not moving to Los Angeles. They've never gotten flashy or trashy, and they don't need their picture in the paper. They just make sound, lightly surprising pop songs. With *Get the Picture*, they've done it again, and a little differently.

Smash Mouth have written wacky tunes about TV psychics and getting dumped for another woman. But four albums in, thinking about the long haul, they come across like your average backyard astronomer, a guy with his telescope next to the gas grill: totally average and yearning to see something no one else has ever seen. On "Space Man," singer Steve Harwell even drops a bunch of "lost in space" metaphors.

Their idea of a protest song is "105," which courageously takes a stand against traffic jams; in "Always Gets Her Way," the romantic hierarchy is overturned as an uncool boy hooks the *très* cool girl. They come on like Huey Lewis armed with a Super Soaker instead of a nine-iron.

They're so straightforward, you can forget how crafty, even sly, Smash Mouth can get. The CD's first single, "You Are My Number One," was written by 62-year-old tunesmith Neil Diamond, and it sounds as effervescent and sincere as a collaboration with SpongeBob SquarePants. It's plausible, user-friendly bubblegum reggae — think No Doubt, not Sugar Ray.

They already scored a hit with a cover of Diamond's "I'm a Believer" (from the *Shrek* soundtrack). They're recording a song with Diamond for his next CD. Among much else, say this about Smash Mouth: They make the normal seem weird. *RJ SMITH*

STEVE HARWELL'S
CURRENT LISTENING

- DRIST
BITTER HALO SPINOUT
- JASON MRAZ WAITING FOR MY
ROCKET TO COME ELEKTRA

JAMES MARSDEN
ACTOR IN X2

I LOVE THIS CD!

COLDPLAY
A RUSH OF BLOOD TO THE HEAD
CAPITOL

"They remind me of Radiohead. I like their melodic aspect. It's simple but compelling."



➤ Bubba could make the 'hood square dance.

HICK-HOP HOORAY!

Burly rapper makes hip-hop squeal like a pig

BUBBA SPARXXX

DELIVERANCE ★★☆☆

BEAT CLUB/INTERSCOPE

➤➤ WITH *DELIVERANCE*, Bubba Sparxxx's bracing, hoedowning sophomore album, the cherubic Athens, Georgia, MC has created the sleeper hit of the season. Sparxxx's first outing — the pleurably jittery, revealing *Dark Days, Bright Nights* — introduced his vision of a "New South," and its mixed reception endows *Deliverance* with humility and focused determination. "Solid on the surface as I crumble within/But legends are made out of vulnerable men," he raps on the title track. "I'm back on my feet without a hint of bitterness/And one way or another, I shall have deliverance."

While the album takes its title from the classic 1972 male-bonding flick that made a whole generation fear southern masculinity, its musical inspiration stems from Joel and Ethan Coen's *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Mad producer Timbaland reaches deep in his overalls and pulls out a blend of bluegrass, rockabilly, folk, blues and hip-hop so down-home, it could make the 'hood square dance.

The pensive, lovelorn "My Baby's Gone," the reflective "Comin' Round" and the man-on-the-run lamentation "Warrant" feature blues vocals, fiddles and hyperkinetic drums — Sparxxx calls it "hick-hop," but it's boogie music for Sean John-clad wage slaves who have spent the day picking cotton and baling hay.

Outkast collaborators Organized Noize embellish *Deliverance* with marching-band horns ("Like It or Not") and electric guitars ("Back in the Mud," "New South"). But Sparxxx is no producer's creation. His lexicon is deep, his diction clear and his words resolute. On the harmonica-powered "Jimmy Mathis," he raps with pride about his dad and boasts about his prowess: "I ain't even tapped into half my potential/But I have shown growth, though, and that is essential." True enough. *Deliverance* marks Bubba Sparxxx's emergence as an artist with plenty of untold stories to put to rhyme. *kris ex*

BUBBA SPARXXX'S
CURRENT LISTENING

➤➤ COOL BREEZE EAST POINT'S
GREATEST HITS INTERSCOPE

➤➤ NEAL MCCOY
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT ATLANTIC

excellent debut: 13 teen-angst songs about girls, booze and fast living, raced through at amphetamine pace, sung with a Replacements-style whiskey rasp. The rollicking Johnny Thunders cover "Crime of the Century" is pure New York Dolls swagger; "Stain Glass Shoes" could be mistaken for prime Clash; and the single "Which of the Two of Us" matches Cheap Trick's power chording to the bubblegum punk of local heroes the Ramones (Daniel "Fifth Ramone" Rey produces here). Derivative, but irresistibly infectious.

EVERETT TRUE

STATE PROPERTY

THE CHAIN GANG VOL. II ★★☆☆

ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM

Showcase album from Jay-Z's Philly-based homeys and underlings

The five newcomer MCs who make up State Property (along with Freeway and Beanie Sigel) sound like the Roc-A-Fella members Jay-Z doesn't invite on yacht cruises. It's not that their skills are subpar (although their voices often pile up, indistinct) — for the most part, Peedi Crakk, Young Chris, Neef, Oschino and Sparks are a grim bunch. They run on about ghetto strife, not partying and Bacardi-ing, over dour, depressed loops. Even the most upbeat songs scrap the Roc's usual revved-up soul for pared-down minimalism: "Can't Stop, Won't Stop" juggles synthesized woodblock pops and tinny snares, while "When You Hear That," featuring Dirt "ODB" McGirt, sets boom-bap around a toy police car-siren wail.

JONAH WEINER

STEADMAN

REVIVE ★★☆☆

ELEKTRA

Dreamy power-pop from Paul McCartney's favorite new group

Singer Simon Steadman assembled his band amid the gently rolling hills of England's South Coast, where they won the endorsement of their neighbor Paul McCartney. That's not surprising, because Steadman sits in that tradition of melodically Beatlesque groups that runs from McCartney's original protégés Badfinger through XTC and Crowded House. They favor sunny, soaring choruses and high harmonies, mostly soaked in a semi-psychedelic mood of mellow optimism, typified by the sleepy, delicious "Carried." Steadman's falsetto occasionally echoes Geddy Lee of Rush, and his songs can be disappointingly vague — the anthemic finale of the title track is spacious yet empty. But then again, so was "Hey Jude." ...

PAUL DU NOYER

S.T.U.N.

EVOLUTION OF ENERGY ★★☆☆

GEFFEN

L.A. foursome aspires to change the world through overheated rock & roll

S.T.U.N. stands for Scream Toward the Uprising of Non-Conformity, the kind of name that shouts "Take us seriously!" This L.A.-grown group cherry-picks the best bits from the most notorious outfits to come out of its hometown — the shouts for revolt of Rage Against the Machine, the hyperactivity of Jane's Addiction, the riff braggadocio of vintage Sunset Strip glam — then adds a twenty-first-century sheen. The spiky youth-revolt call "Annihilation of the Generations" could be a "Youth Gone Wild" for disaffected teens who think Skid Row is classic rock, while "We Want You" is a loose-jointed reminder to the

"non-abnormal" that they're "outnumbered." S.T.U.N. never quite say what their revolution is about — the lyrics make vague references to transcending conformity and boredom.

But *Evolution of Energy* is a standout debut, and when you're starting a movement, getting attention is half the battle.

MAURA JOHNSTON

THREE 6 MAFIA

DA UNBREAKABLES ★★☆☆

HYPNOTIZE MINDS/COLUMBIA

Syrup-sipping Memphis thugs prove they're not just one-hit wonders

Three 6 Mafia's bizarre breakthrough single, 2000's woozy "Sippin' on Some Syrup," lauded the mind-altering effects of cough medicine. Cristal could not satisfy these sick puppies: Latter-day Geto Boys Lord Infamous and Crunchy Blac rap like gangstas trapped in a horror flick, and producers DJ Paul and Juicy J. pour ominous piano and strings over lazy Dirty South bounce. *Da*



The Star Spangles: "C'mon, I'm due back at the bank in 10 minutes."

Unbreakables enlivens routine hip-hop tropes like murder ("They Bout to Find Yo Body") and misogyny ("Like a Pimp") with cartoonish menace. But Three 6 Mafia don't just spew hate: "Money Didn't Change Me" resonates with hurt; "Ridin Spinners," a perfect driving song, extols custom rims; and "Bin Laden" concerns not the terrorist but a special variety of weed. There's more to life, after all, than Robitussin.

NICK CATUCCI

THRICE

THE ARTIST IN THE AMBULANCE

ISLAND

On its third record, this melodic punk band cranks the metal roots

When SoCal punk-metal quartet Thrice let rip, they don't just flirt with heavy, staccato riffing like Sum 41 or Blink-182: They put their metal where their mouths are. The band comes off like a headbanger's who's-who, chugging through Metallica's majestic dynamics, Pantera's battering rhythms and Iron Maiden's guitar harmonies while incorporating the introspective emo-core of Thursday and the pop melodies of Jimmy Eat World. Somehow, all these



Bob Dylan: "Excuse me, sir — do you have a license for that mustache?"

stylistic variations don't disrupt the music's flow, which rocks as hard as it aches. "Under a Killing Moon" balances a thrash-metal verse with a sing-along chorus, while "Melting Point of Wax" welds together acrobatic guitars, tribal drumming and yearning vocals. Head-bangers and emo-punks are still mortal enemies at the local skate park, but Thrice do their part to bridge the gap.

JON WIEDERHORN

VARIOUS ARTISTS

MASKED AND ANONYMOUS — MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE

☆☆☆

COLUMBIA

Bob Dylan is Jack Fate in his new movie. And this is its soundtrack

While Bob Dylan's first starring big-screen vehicle in 16 years may have APPROACH WITH CAUTION written all over it — he plays a rock star recently released from prison in "a mythological Third World America" — its accompanying soundtrack is far more enticing. Despite the confusing rondelet approach — other people cover Dylan, Dylan covers Dylan, Dylan covers other people — the result hangs together in remarkably coherent fashion. Dylan's retooling of the late-'60s song "Down in the Flood" leads into the Grateful Dead's rasping version of "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue." Even the Magokoro Brothers' take on "My Back Pages" is nicely Dylan-esque, and

they're not even performing the sucker in English. The party is spoiled only by Articolo 31's Bob-sampling hip-hop revamp of "Like a Rolling Stone," a track that's almost as dismal as Dylan's last cinematic foray, the downright stinky *Hearts of Fire*.

CLARK COLLIS

ANA VICTORIA

LOVE IS ALL... ☆☆☆

ARISTA

Teen singer produced by Dad — it's the Latina LeAnn Rimes!

Brought up in Mexico City by musician parents but described as nonspecifically "Latin American" in her press release,



JASON BIGGS
STAR OF AMERICAN WEDDING

I LOVE THIS CD!

DAVE MATTHEWS BAND UNDER THE TABLE AND DREAMING

RCA

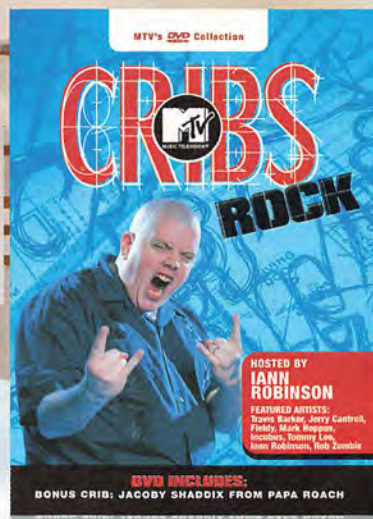
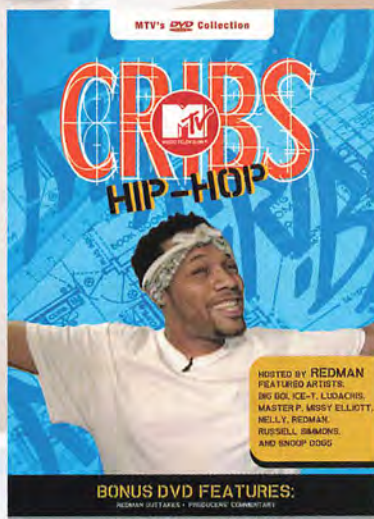
"I like all kinds of music, but Dave took me into a whole new realm."



Be A Fly On The Wall.

Cribs: Hip-Hop
Redman
Snoop Dogg
Missy Elliott
Big Boi (Outkast)
Master P
Ludacris
Ice-T
Nelly
Russell Simmons

Cribs: Rock
Incubus
Tommy Lee
Rob Zombie
Fieldy (Korn)
Mark Hoppus (Blink 182)
Travis Barker (Blink 182)
Jerry Cantrell (Alice In Chains)
Iann Robinson



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Ana Victoria is a 19-year-old with corkscrew tresses, strange equine beauty and a bunch of self-penned songs. She undersings in a way that's slinkily Norah Jones rather than bombastically Mariah Carey, but with a slightly blurred diction ("show me love" becomes "shawmehlurr") that suggests night classes might be required if she's to master English as a Foreign Language. "Under Your Spell" — an engaging love concerto à la Celine Dion — suggests the scale of her promise, but her producer/father, Diego Verdaguer, must provide a more modern, less clichéd sound next time. Night classes for him, too.

TONY POWER

WEEN

QUEBEC ★★★

SANCTUARY

Alt-rock jesters deliver a testament to the brilliance of unrestrained stupidity

As Spinal Tap's David St. Hubbins noted, there's a fine line between clever and stupid. Ween, a long-running Pennsylvania neoprog duo, have spent their career stomping all over that line. Their eighth album sounds like a mix tape

made by someone with a twisted sense of humor and a great P2P connection. Snarling punkabilly hell rides ("It's Gonna Be a Long Night"), gentle, paisley-folk space-outs ("Among His Tribe") and electro-synth-pop novelties ("So Many People in the Neighborhood") rub up against a sweet alt-country ballad punctuated by the priceless kiss-off "Get your punk ass back to the dog show" ("Chocolate Town"). Genre-hopping and a refusal to take themselves seriously have often gotten Ween branded as a juvenile novelty act, but these oddballs have chops aplenty, and the balancing act

they pull off on *qUEBEC* is no joke.

DAVID PEISNER

WIDE RIGHT

WIDE RIGHT ★★★

POPTOP

Brooklyn-based indie band celebrates the loser in all of us

On January 27, 1991, with eight seconds remaining in the game, Scott Norwood's 47-yard field goal drifted wide right, and the Buffalo Bills lost the Super Bowl by one point, crushing the hopes of their downtrodden hometown. Wide Right, a lively rock quartet named for Norwood's gaffe, identify unromantically with losers: They also name a song after Pete Best, the Beatles' original, discarded drummer, rock's consummate also-ran. In her riled, burlap voice, Buffalo-born songwriter Leah Archibald, a mother of two, describes the confines of artsy, marginal adult life in a blue-collar city: Booze appears often as a diversion, as do bowling teams and hockey (twice). She's a true original, equally resentful of

slumming yuppies, a complaining downstairs neighbor and hometown actor Vincent Gallo, whom she accuses of heresy: making a key factual error about the Bills in his film *Buffalo 66*.

ROB TANNENBAUM

ANDREW W.K.

THE WOLF ★★★★★

ISLAND

Older, wiser Detroit pomp-popper still wants the world to party

Andrew W.K.'s first album, *I Get Wet*, sounded as massive as *Hysteria*-era Def Leppard and gave off the same head rush as a keg stand.

That particular W.K. is still present on *The Wolf* — "You can't kill the party," as he says, repeatedly, on "Long Live the Party." But while he still wants to

indulge in parties, sex and monstrous drum sounds, the later-model Andrew isn't afraid to put the brakes on the party to cheer up friends, apologize for his past mistakes (made while partying) and fall in love — surprisingly grown-up sentiments, echoed by a slightly

I LOVE THIS CO!



MICHAEL VICK
ATLANTA FALCONS
QUARTERBACK



JOE BUDDEN
JOE BUDDEN
DEF JAM

"He's a new MC trying to come up in a dirty game. But he's right on point. This album is sick, from the beats to the rhymes and back."

ASTONISHING FACT! >>

WEEN's Dean Ween plays the same red 1962 Stratocaster guitar used on Tina Turner's 1984 album, *Private Dancer*.

OUR TOWN

Rock's cranky uncle writes a talky mini-play about small-town life

NEIL YOUNG

GREENDALE ★★★

REPRISE

>>> THROUGH THE DECADES, Neil Young has cultivated a perspective as singular as his cracked tenor: wide-eyed, quizzical, sympathetic but blunt. Now, at 57, in this "musical novel" about a small California town, he impersonates the Green family and their Greendale neighbors, letting each story lead to another, and another.

Despite its name, Greendale isn't bucolic. Cousin Jed kills a cop, Grandpa loses his temper at a TV reporter, with grim results. His son Earl, an artist, has a creative crisis; Earl's daughter Sun decides to save the planet, starting with a sit-in at a power company. The plot is clarified, with added threads, in a DVD version, a friends-and-neighbors home video. But the album's 10 songs stand together like — let's admit it — a rock opera.

The music — steady, front-porch rock — shambles along easily. Backed by two-thirds of Crazy Horse (Crazy Ho?), Ralph Molina on drums and Billy Talbot on bass, Young strums cozy guitar chords and loping leads, guiding

Greendale's boom-chunk songs to gradual peaks.

All the characters are aspects of Young: Grandpa wishing for simpler times; Sun railing against polluters; longtime bohemian Earl, perhaps the character Young feels closest to. In "Bandit," the album's most quietly memorable song, a guitar tuned down so low that it buzzes cradles the chorus: "Someday, you'll find everything you're looking for."

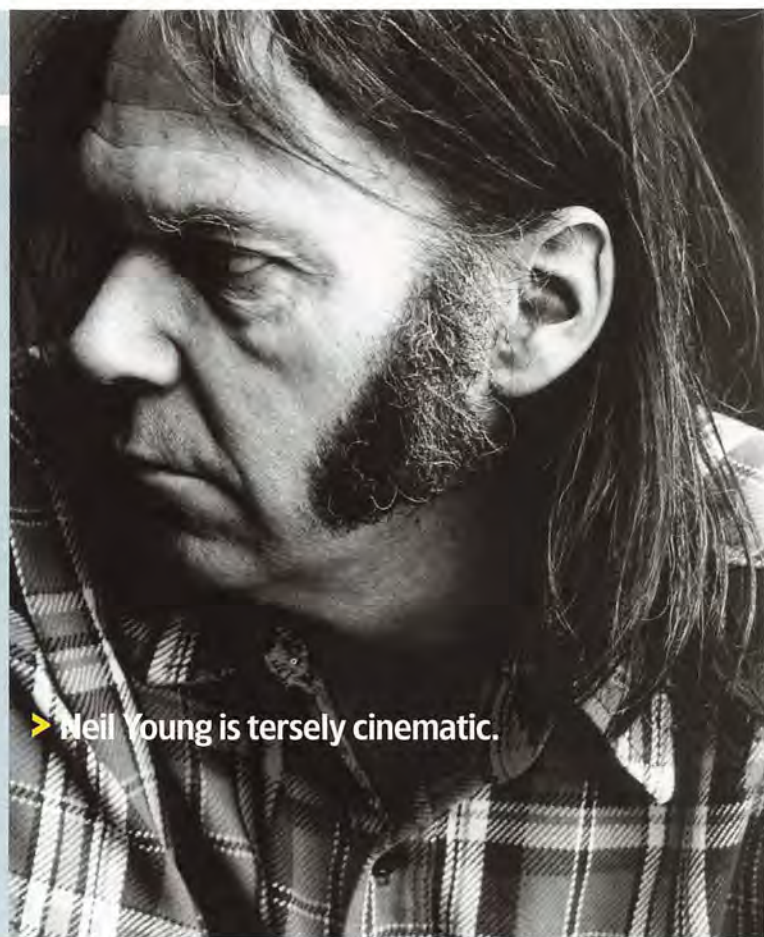
In long songs like the 13-minute "Grandpa's Interview," Young is tersely cinematic, telling precise stories with glimpsed details. Elsewhere, as in "Devil's Sidewalk," he offers characteristic philosophizing: "Some things are getting better, other things a little worse."

Greendale isn't Crazy Horse in full hurricane mode, and there are goofy moments. Who but Young would even attempt a chorus that goes, "We've got to save Mother Earth"? But quirks and all, it's a consistently absorbing tale from a songwriter who's still pushing himself. JON PARELES

LIKE THIS?
TRY THESE!

>>> LUCINDA WILLIAMS
WORLD WITHOUT TEARS LOST HIGHWAY

>>> WILLIE NELSON
RED HEADED STRANGER COLUMBIA LEGACY



> Neil Young is tersely cinematic.



Never shake hands with Andrew W.K.

THE YING YANG TWINS

ME AND MY BROTHER
☆☆

TVT

Atlanta duo has shit to say, but not much else

The Ying Yang Twins are so relentlessly raunchy, they make 2 Live Crew sound like James Taylor. Best known for an absurd, infectious ode to pussy farts — 2000's Disney-molesting breakout hit "Whistle While You Twurk" — D-Roc and Kaine (neither twins nor brothers) keep it just as filthy on their third album. "Naggin'" is like a Hank Williams relationship gripe updated for the baby-mama era, but scatological shouts and boasts elsewhere get old quickly. Rare moments of creativity disrupt the monotony — the shape-shifting drums and rolling harmonies on "Armageddon" are mind-bending — but otherwise, it's all shit and too few giggles for this durdy-durdy duo.

JOSEPH PATEL

subdued musical ethos that channels both the Beatles and prog-metallars Helloween. *The Wolf* sets up Andrew W.K.'s post-partying career as motivational speaker for the bloody-nose set, coaxing pit denizens to open their hearts a little as they hoist one another above the mosh.

MAURA JOHNSTON

Blender Approved

The best new releases of the last three months

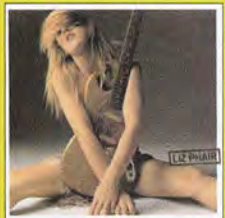


BEYONCÉ

Dangerously in Love

COLUMBIA

Beyoncé proves she's a hitmaker and an album artist on her solo debut, whether cooing with Luther Vandross or swaggering with Jay-Z.



LIZ PHAIR

Liz Phair

CAPITOL

The former "blow-job queen" pulls out the heavy styling product here, aiming for radio success without losing her troublemaker side.



KINGS OF LEON

Youth and Young Manhood

RCA

Three brothers and a cousin from Tennessee choogle with grit and economy on their debut. Like the Strokes, but with cross-eyed parents.



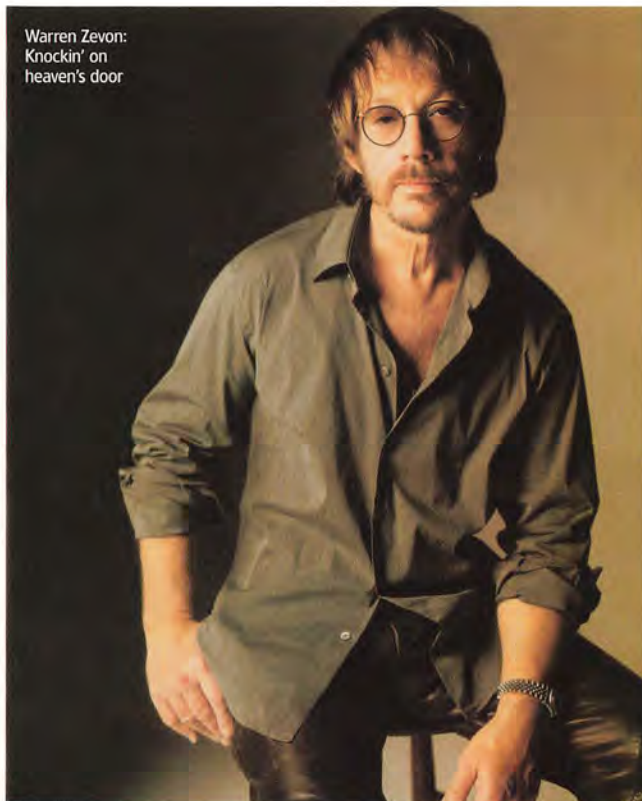
DAMIEN RICE

O

VECTOR

The Colin Farrell of singer-songwriters: a scruffy, soulful Irishman steeped in the sort of doomed romanticism that makes the ladies melt.

Warren Zevon: Knockin' on heaven's door



GOODBYE NOTE

Master songwriter's gloriously slapdash farewell

WARREN ZEVON

THE WIND ☆☆☆

ARTEMIS

➤➤ SAVE THE WEEPY tributes, deathbed mea culpas and long goodbye tours for somebody else. Warren Zevon is facing death with as much solemnity as he brought to his previous 56 years. That is to say, he's doing it with a mixture of mirth, mayhem and a pinch of poignancy.

Last year, Zevon began *The Wind*, his twelfth album, after he learned that he had terminal lung cancer. A loose, jam-session informality prevails: Guitar strings squeak, jokes introduce songs, call-and-response vocals break into conversations. It's possible to read dire self-assessment into his lyrics: "I just couldn't go where I was told"; "The less you know, the better off you'll be."

But it's not so much what Zevon says as how he says it: with an air of ragged, nothing-to-lose spontaneity. The all-star backing singers — long-time fans Dwight Yoakam, Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen — might as well be boozy interlopers who stumbled into the session, for all the precision they put into their

performances. On "Disorder in the House," Springsteen reconnects with the room-wrecking informality missing from his 2002 album, *The Rising*; he takes a couple of deranged guitar solos that threaten to seriously shorten his amplifier's lifespan. Joe Walsh, meanwhile, slathers some very un-Eagles-like slide guitar all over "Rub Me Raw." There are plenty of bum notes, but only a handful of unctuous ones — a sax solo on "Please Stay" that sounds as though it wandered in from a Yanni session down the hall, for example.

The ballads ("She's Too Good for Me," "El Amor de Mi Vida," "Keep Me in Your Heart") expose Zevon's vulnerability; the first-take fragility of his voice says more about his condition than a mountain of medical papers. He brings it all home on "Prison Grove," with Ry Cooder's eerie slide guitar and a chain-gang chorus moaning the blues. "Take one last look," Zevon sings, and he leaves no doubt that he's savoring every last minute. GREG KOT

WARREN ZEVON'S CURRENT LISTENING

THE WHITE STRIPES
ELEPHANT THIRD MARY2

THE WHITE STRIPES WHITE BLOOD
CELLS SYMPATHY FOR THE RECORD INDUSTRY

THE 40

MOST POPULAR SONGS IN AMERICA

→ Teen pop dead? Shut up! Lizzie McGuire starlet Hilary Duff goes straight to the head of our class



I'm sooo number 1!

1 HILARY DUFF "SO YESTERDAY"

METAMORPHOSIS

The new queen of teen takes a page from her predecessor — the Lizzie McGuire star's new single is produced by Avril Lavigne's rainmakers, the Matrix. The 16-year-old Duff celebrates the release of her debut with a flurry of late-August appearances — she takes a bow on *TRL* on August 26 and the MTV Music Awards two days later.

HOW WE DID IT

The Most Popular Songs chart is based on radio and video airplay, and album sales. Provided by HITSDailyDouble.com: "Proof that any idiot in the music business can have a Web site."



POSITION	TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM/LABEL
1	"SO YESTERDAY"	HILARY DUFF	METAMORPHOSIS BUENA VISTA/HOLLYWOOD
2	"LOVE @ 1ST SIGHT"	MARY J. BLIGE FEAT. METHOD MAN	LOVE & LIFE MCA
3	"FAINT"	LINKIN PARK	METEORA WARNER BROS.
4	"RIGHT THURR"	CHINGY	JACKPOT DISTURBING THE PEACE/PRIORITY/CAPITOL
5	"CRAZY IN LOVE"	BEYONCÉ FEAT. JAY-Z	DANGEROUSLY IN LOVE COLUMBIA
6	"SO FAR AWAY"	STAINED	14 SHADES OF GREY FUEL/ELEKTRA
7	"P.I.M.P."	50 CENT	GET RICH OR DIE TRYIN' SHADY/AFTERMATH/WINTERSCOPE
8	"SHAKE YA TAILFEATHER"	NELLY, P. DIDDY & MURPHY LEE	BAD BOYS II ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK BAD BOY/UNIVERSAL
9	"THE SCIENTIST"	COLDPLAY	A RUSH OF BLOOD TO THE HEAD CAPITOL
10	"JUST BECAUSE"	JANE'S ADDICTION	STRAYS CAPITOL
11	"FRONTIN'"	THE NEPTUNES FEAT. JAY-Z	THE NEPTUNES AND STAR TRAK PRESENT...CLONES STAR TRAK/ARISTA
12	"BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS"	CLAY AIKEN	RCA
13	"THOIA THOING"	R. KELLY	THE "R" IN R&B COLLECTION, VOL. 1 JIVE
14	"SHOW ME HOW TO LIVE"	AUDIOSLAVE	AUDIOSLAVE EPIC/INTERSCOPE
15	"FLYING WITHOUT WINGS"	RUBEN STUDDARD	J RECORDS
16	"ROCK WIT U"	ASHANTI	CHAPTER II MURDER INC./DEF JAM
17	"CAN'T HOLD US DOWN"	CHRISTINA AGUILERA W/LIL' KIM	STRIPPED RCA
18	"MAGIC STICK"	LIL' KIM FEAT. 50 CENT	LA BELLA MAFIA QUEEN BEE/ATLANTIC
19	"GOING UNDER"	EVANESCENCE	FALLEN WIND-UP
20	"STACY'S MOM"	FOUNTAINS OF WAYNE	WELCOME INTERSTATE MANAGERS 5-CURVE/VIRGIN
21	"FRANTIC"	METALLICA	ST. ANGER ELEKTRA
22	"WHITE FLAG"	DIDO	LIFE FOR RENT ARISTA
23	"BRING ME TO LIFE"	EVANESCENCE	FALLEN WIND-UP
24	"LIKE GLUE"	SEAN PAUL	DUTTY ROCK VIRGIN/ATLANTIC
25	"SEVEN NATION ARMY"	THE WHITE STRIPES	ELEPHANT THIRD MAN/V2
26	"LIGHT YOUR ASS ON FIRE"	BUSTA RHYMES	THE NEPTUNES AND STAR TRAK PRESENT...CLONES STAR TRAK/ARISTA
27	"FEELIN' FREAKY"	NICK CANNON FEAT. B2K	NICK CANNON JIVE
28	"FOREVER AND FOR ALWAYS"	SHANIA TWAIN	UP! MERCURY NASHVILLE
29	"BOYS & GIRLS"	GOOD CHARLOTTE	THE YOUNG & THE HOPELESS DAYLIGHT/EPIC
30	"SEÑORITA"	JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE	JUSTIFIED JIVE
31	"SHE LIVES IN MY LAP"	OUTKAST	SPEAKERBOXXXX/ THE LOVE BELOW LAFACE/ARISTA
32	"CALLING ALL ANGELS"	TRAIN	MY PRIVATE NATION COLUMBIA
33	"MY LOVE IS LIKE... WO"	MYA	MOODRING A&M
34	"THE BOYS OF SUMMER"	THE ATARIS	SO LONG, ASTORIA COLUMBIA
35	"THESE DAYS"	ALIEN ANT FARM	TRUANT DREAMWORKS
36	"SOME GIRLS"	JC CHASEZ	SCHIZOPHRENIA JIVE
37	"COME AWAY WITH ME"	NORAH JONES	COME AWAY WITH ME BLUE NOTE
38	"GHETTO MUSICK"	OUTKAST	SPEAKERBOXXXX/ THE LOVE BELOW LAFACE/ARISTA
39	"UNWELL"	MATCHBOX TWENTY	MORE THAN YOU THINK YOU ARE ATLANTIC
40	"HEADSTRONG"	TRAPT	TRAPT WARNER BROS.

2 MARY J. BLIGE FEAT. METHOD MAN "LOVE @ 1ST SIGHT"

LOVE & LIFE

In which the empress of modern R&B reunites with the producer with whom she made her name — a shy, retiring character known as P. Diddy. By the time she performs the song on *The Today Show* on August 29, Blige's iron grip on urban and pop radio will be complete.



4 CHINGY "RIGHT THURR"

JACKPOT

Culled from *Jackpot*, the debut release on Ludacris's Disturbing the Peace imprint, this leering jam from 23-year-old St. Louis



native (and Nelly pal) Chingy was number 4 on *Billboard's* singles chart, number 2 on the rap singles chart and was the most-played video on BET and MTV2.

6 STAINED "SO FAR AWAY"

14 SHADES OF GREY

Thanks to airplay on alternative, rock and pop stations, the second single from the Massachusetts moe-metal quartet's fourth album had already hit the Top 10 in late



June. Look for the debut from Lo-Pro, the first act on singer Aaron Lewis's 413 label, in late summer.

11 THE NEPTUNES F. JAY-Z "FRONTIN'"

THE NEPTUNES AND STAR TRAK
PRESENT...CLONES

Is there no end to the fearsome productivity of Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo? It's not



in sight yet, as this Jigga collaboration is already laying waste to radio. Nor will it be by late August, as the pair continue a tour with the Roots until September 14.

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"I Go by My Gut!"

→ And why not? **Gina Gershon** has played Nancy Sinatra, a stripper (*Showgirls*) and a sadomasochistic lesbian plumber (*Bound*), so what role could possibly hold any fear for her? What about picking her 10 favorite albums for *Blender*? "Oh, I really want to pick 20. . . ."

BY JON REGARDIE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN STEPHENS

➤➤ GINA GERSHON HAS what may be the world's best answer to the question, What was the first album you bought?

"I remember the first album I stole," she says with a grin. "*Led Zeppelin IV*. I think back and I'm like, 'How did I have the balls to steal an album?'"

Doing anything for a piece of great music is the kind of behavior you'd expect from Jacki, the character Gershon plays in September's *Prey for Rock and Roll*. The film details an all-female band's crawl through the abusive gutters of L.A. rock. It's powered by the bruised and ballsy Jacki, who as she turns 40 is confronting the fact that she hasn't broken big.

Gershon's own age is something of a mystery. She could easily pass for a woman in her late twenties but is actually in her forties. When asked

her age, the usually direct actress becomes vague.

"Last year, the Internet said I was 26," she complains. "I'm not fucking 26! Then 53, and I got mad. Then all of a sudden I was 43 and I said, 'OK, whatever.'"

The Los Angeles-born Gershon scored her first notable film role in *Pretty in Pink*. She has since balanced mainstream movies *The Insider* and *Face/Off* (and *Cabaret* on Broadway) with sexy roles in *Showgirls* and *Bound*. "I go by my gut," she says with a shrug. "If I like it, I do it."

Right now Gershon's gut appears to be failing her. She is visibly troubled by *Blender's* request that she pick 10 albums.

"I really want 20," she laments. "It's like being allowed to invite only three friends to a party — it feels like I'm fucking someone over."



DAVID BOWIE

THE RISE AND FALL OF ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS

VIRGIN, 1972

"For my poetry class in high school, everyone brought in Yeats and Robert Frost. I brought [lyrics to] 'Rock & Roll Suicide' as my poem. The teacher thought it was really interesting. He said, 'It has this vampiric quality.' I thought he would kill me, but he was into it."



ELVIS COSTELLO

IMPERIAL BEDROOM

RYKODISC, 1982

"My sister made me go to his concert. I had a test the next day. I was like, 'Elvis who?' I thought he was dead.' I sat there with my mouth hanging open. Who gives a shit about a test? I totally fell in love with him. I have seen him in concert more than I have anyone else. I feel like I've grown up with him."



JONI MITCHELL

BLUE

REPRISE, 1971

"When I lived with my boyfriend, this seemed to be on a lot. It's a perfect Sunday album when you're reading the paper or making eggs. It's very calming, very familiar. Also, it's a good album when I'm in a melancholy mood and slightly depressed. It makes me feel a little bit better without being too aggressive."



ANNIE LENNOX

DIVA

ARISTA, 1992

That song 'Why' just kills me. If I have to do a sad scene, I'll put that on. I hear it and I immediately know I'm going to go someplace else. Anyone who's had a really sad breakup can relate to it. Annie is a friend of mine, and we have a lot of similarities when it comes to relationships, unfortunately."



JIMI HENDRIX

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED

MCA, 1967

"I was 13 or 14. I used to go over to my best friend's house, and we would smoke pot and listen to this. This is the first time I really felt a guitar be a character. It had a personality that was trying to express all the things I didn't know how to. It made me aware that to open up, you don't have to be so literal."



TOM WAITS

FRANK'S WILD YEARS

ISLAND, 1987

"If I have to go do a really sexy scene, or I have to get myself in a certain mood, like a little bit of aggressive sexy, I'll listen to 'Temptation'. It's just so wild and raw. If I have to go to a party and I want to be, you know, in cruise mode, I'll listen to that song."



THE BEATLES

ABBEY ROAD

CAPITOL, 1969

"The Beatles were always there. I had *Yellow Submarine* sheets on my bed. When I was doing *Cabaret*, I asked different people, 'How do you warm up your voice?' Beck told me, 'I sing really loud.' I said, 'Like the Beatles.' He made me a couple of tapes. When I got sick of my warm-up tapes, I'd sing this a lot."



JANIS JOPLIN

JANIS JOPLIN'S GREATEST HITS

COLUMBIA/LEGACY, 1973

"My dad loved 'Me and Bobbie McGee,' so I had an attachment to that song growing up. Also, I had an older sister who dressed like her, so I always thought, 'Ooh, that's cool.' You can't not be emotionally affected by the way she sings. When I sing, I think, 'God, I wanna have that connection.'"



EARTH, WIND & FIRE

THE BEST OF EARTH, WIND & FIRE, VOL. 1

COLUMBIA/LEGACY, 1978

"My best friend and I would go home from school, put on Earth, Wind & Fire and make up dances. They were one of my first concerts. My uncle, who was a musician, took me. They came out of pyramids. They were awesome, really hot. You gotta add a little funk to the mix."



THE CLASH

LONDON CALLING

EPIC, 1979

"When I lived with this guy in college, we used to wake up and crank *London Calling* at 8 in the morning before we would go to school. He would do his push-ups and I would make food. It's like an instant B-12 shot as soon as you wake up. I think our neighbors were annoyed with us."

AND MORE...

FIONA APPLE TIDAL
BADFINGER THE VERY BEST OF
BOYS PET SOUNDS
BEASTIE BOYS CHECK YOUR HEAD
THE BEATLES 1 BECK
MIDNITE VULTURES BECK
MUTATIONS BECK ODELY
BECK SEA CHANGE
BLONDIE PARALLEL LINES
DAVID BOWIE HUNKY DORY
RUTH BROWN THE BEST OF RUTH BROWN
GAVIN BRYARS JESUS' BLOOD NEVER FAILED ME
YET JOHNNY CASH THE ESSENTIAL JOHNNY CASH
RAY CHARLES & BETTY CARTER JUST YOU, JUST ME
THE CLASH COMBAT ROCK
CORALI CLEMENT SALLE
DES PAS PERDUES PATSY CLINE
12 GREATEST HITS
LEONARD COHEN THE BEST OF LEONARD COHEN
SAM COOKE THE BEST OF SAM COOKE
ELVIS COSTELLO ARMED FORCES
ELVIS COSTELLO BRUTAL YOUTH
ELVIS COSTELLO MY AIM IS TRUE
ELVIS COSTELLO THIS YEAR'S MODEL
ELVIS COSTELLO WITH BURT BACHARACH PAINTED FROM MEMORY
THE DAVEY BROTHERS HONKEY NUMBER NINE
JOHNNY DOWD WRONG SIDE OF MEMPHIS
BOB DYLAN BLONDE ON BLONDE
EURYTHMICS BE YOURSELF
TONIGHT CESARIA EVORA CABO VERDE
4 NON BLONDES BIGGER, BETTER, FASTER, MORE! SERGE GAINSBOURG COMIC STRIP
MACY GRAY ON HOW LIFE IS GUNS N' ROSES
APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION EMMYLOU HARRIS WRECKING BALL
RICKIE LEE JONES RICKIE LEE JONES TOM JONES THE GOLDEN HITS
KOOLO KETH SEX STYLE LENNY KRAVITZ LET LOVE RULE
K.D. LANG SHADOWLAND
LOTTE LOTTE LOTTE LENYA SINGS KURT WEILL'S THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS
HENRY MANCINI PURE GOLD
AIMEE MANN WHATEVER CHRISTINA MCGILL SCULFI
JONI MITCHELL COURT AND SPARK
THE MONKEES THE BEST OF THE MONKEES
WILLIE NELSON CRAZY THE DEMO SESSIONS
LINDA PERRY IN FLIGHT
THE PIXIES DOOLITTLE
IGGY POP LUST FOR LIFE
ELVIS PRESLEY KING OF CREOLE
PRETENDERS THE SINGLES
PRINCE PURPLE RAIN
RADIOHEAD THE BENDS
BONNIE RAITT NICK OF TIME
RAMONES RAMONES
LOU REED TRANSFORMER
THE ROLLING STONES BEGGARS BANQUET
THE ROLLING STONES EXILE ON MAIN STREET
LEON RUSSELL LEON RUSSELL AND THE SHELTER PEOPLE
NINA SIMONE THE BEST OF NINA SIMONE
FRANK SINATRA SINATRA REPRISSE
THE GOOD YEARS
SLY & THE FAMILY STONE REYS A RIOT GOIN' ON
SNOOP DOGG DOGGY DOGG
DOGGYSTYLE DUSTY SPRINGFIELD DUSTY IN MEMPHIS
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN
TALKING HEADS MORE SONGS ABOUT BUILDINGS AND FOOD TRAFFIC
THE LOW SPARK OF HIGH HEELED BOYS
U2 THE JOSHUA TREE
THE WHITE STRIPES WHITE BLOOD CELLS
LUCINDA WILLIAMS CAR WHEELS ON A GRAVEL ROAD
STEVIE WONDER SONGS IN THE KEY OF LIFE
DWIGHT YOAKAM GONE
NEIL YOUNG AFTER THE GOLD RUSH
VARIOUS ARTISTS RESERVOIR DOGS
SOUNDTRACK
VARIOUS ARTISTS TAKE IT OFF: THE STRIPTEASE CLASSICS

His Back Pages

The “answer,” my friend, may well be found in this career-spanning deluge of Dylan reissues



HE HAS BEEN many things in his rich, strange life, but the former Robert Allen

Zimmerman is not a hi-fi concept. He emerges, on his first records, out of the crackle and hiss of an old folk 78 and has ended up — touring like a carny at age 62 — a no-frills song-and-dance man. Fifteen of his albums have been snazzed up on hybrid Super Audio CD (SACD) discs — great for people who like guitar solos to come from behind the couch — which also play on normal CD players. Snapshots of an artist moving bafflingly fast, they reveal Dylan the preacher, the lover, the jester, the bastard, the beatnik raver and the hairshirt folkie.

From the start, he reveled in confounded expectations. *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963) — his second album for Columbia — has a gravitas that is astonishing for someone not yet 22. “Girl of the

North Country” is sad and wise, while “Masters of War” (“I just want you to know I can see through your masks”) is hair-raising — like a statue of Abe Lincoln coming to life to hand down a terrible judgment.

But the vengeful geezer persona was short-lived. The following year's *Another Side of Bob Dylan* peeved purists and lefties with its levity and love songs — “All I Really Want to Do” is the definitive '60s come-on (“I don't want to knock you up,” indeed). But if the purists had foreseen the following two years of drugs, big hair and electric instruments, they would have kept their mouths shut.

Bringing It All Back Home kicks off this purple patch with a splurge of rock & roll fun. “Subterranean Homesick Blues” walks like a speed freak, and the acoustic “It's All Over Now, Baby Blue” underlines a flair for romantic cruelty. *Highway 61 Revisited* is better still. “Ballad of a

Thin Man” staggers along a villainous piano line and oozes contempt for anyone less hip than Dylan, while “Like a Rolling Stone” remains his finest six minutes: a gospel-tinged canter spearing some rich-kid scenester but also opening into an anthem to all the possibilities of the '60s.

Proving he could do anything, Dylan's next step was to invade Nashville. What emerged were drugged-sounding drug songs (“Rainy Day Women #12 & 35”), cute pop (“I Want You”) and epic love ballads for his new wife, Sara Lowndes (“Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands”). The sardonic *Blonde on Blonde* hit shelves in May 1966, and Dylan's career — like the vivid images of his lyrics — seemed to have an uncontrollable momentum.

Then, on July 29, Dylan wrecked his Triumph motorcycle, damaged several vertebrae and withdrew to his home in upstate New York. There he fathered children and made his “funny voice” albums: the haunting, biblical *John Wesley Harding* and the short, jaunty *Nashville Skyline*. Both were country LPs, meager and unexpectedly respectful of tradition, and boasted two of his best pop songs (the former's “I'll Be Your Baby Tonight,” the latter's “Lay Lady Lay”).

But Dylan sounded weary. Truly awful records — *Self Portrait*, *Dylan* — were to follow. In fact, the chief strength of 1974's *Planet Waves*, his first U.S. number 1 album and debut studio outing with erstwhile backing combo the Band, is that it's not genuinely bad. Meanwhile, Dylan's marriage was disintegrating — a situation not helped by the number of women he was sleeping with on the side.

Out of the trauma came a bewilderingly great album. *Blood on the Tracks* (1974) remains a masterpiece batch of honest songs about relationships — exciting new ones, failing old ones — brought to life with a rejuvenated lyrical palette. “Idiot Wind” starts as if it's already halfway through, a bucket of bile

BOB DYLAN

THE FREEWHEELIN' BOB DYLAN
★★★★★

ANOTHER SIDE OF BOB DYLAN
★★★★★

BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME
★★★★★

HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED
★★★★★

BLONDE ON BLONDE
★★★★★

JOHN WESLEY HARDING
★★★★★

NASHVILLE SKYLINE
★★★★★

PLANET WAVES
★★★★★

BLOOD ON THE TRACKS
★★★★★

DESIRE
★★★★★

STREET LEGAL
★★★★★

SLOW TRAIN COMING
★★★★★

INFIDELS
★★★★★

OH MERCY
★★★★★

LOVE AND THEFT
★★★★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Hold still, Bob, you've got something on your lip.



"Screw this, I'm going electric!"



aimed at critics, Lowndes, Dylan himself and anyone who deified him. But every blast of ire is delivered with a tune as strong as any on *Blonde on Blonde*.

By contrast, the polished, refined gypsy rock of *Desire* sounds like the work of another artist (only those tolerant of electric violin need apply). Hardcore Dylanologists shun the record (the lyrics were cowritten with Jacques Levy), but *Desire* remains the best Sunday afternoon Dylan album, with Dylan in creamy voice and "Hurricane" relocating protest rock in punk's year zero, 1976.

Since then, the unruly old-timer has ruined Live Aid, duetted with Michael Jackson at Liz Taylor's fifty-fifth birthday party and caught a life-threatening disease from some chickens. But the weirdest thing he did was converting to Christianity (he'd been raised Jewish) in Tucson, Arizona, in November 1978 while touring the

From the start, Bob Dylan revealed in confounding expectations and shifting his identities.



fussy, unfinished-sounding *Street Legal*. His conversion had ugly side effects (e.g., railing against homosexuals from the stage), but it produced an album, *Slow Train Coming*, that smoked with fire and brimstone. The spooky electric piano and stealthy rhythm of "Gotta Serve Somebody" denote the inexorable approach of Judgment. "I Believe in You" is a transfixing love song that happens to be about Jesus.

Dylan's fervor dissipated, and his second drought took hold. Dire Straits guitarist Mark Knopfler, who had played on *Slow Train*, returned in 1983 to helm *Infidels* with consummate clarity and power, but "Jokerman" aside, its reggae dabblings irk, and the bard of Hibbing's terrible '80s continued until *Oh Mercy* closed the decade on a high. Produced by Daniel Lanois, it occasionally sounds like a U2 album with Bob Dylan singing on it, though mournful self-examination drips from "What Good Am I?" and the brilliant "Most of the Time."

"Tweedle Dee & Tweedle Dum," a classic breakneck parable full of possible mean-

ings, starts *Love and Theft*, a 2001 release that reveals a contemporary Dylan, confident and playful. He sounds gargly but full of pep, and the record boasts a sonic coherence lent by recurrent references to old-timey jump-blues and pop-jazz.

Forty years after he rolled to New York in a Pontiac, Dylan continued his unexpected resurgence by fooling and dodging again, trying on new voices and funny suits, as he often has. That inventiveness always sounds good, whether on shellac, 8-track cartridge or hybrid Super Audio CD with 5.1 Surround Sound. **TONY POWER**

BANGLES

THE ESSENTIAL BANGLES ★★

COLUMBIA/LEGACY

Eighties girl group on the reunion trail

The Bangles started out as latter-day California dreamers — their mid-'80s tracks "Hero Takes a Fall" and "The Real World" were drenched with sunny harmonies and jangly echoes of the

swingin' side of '60s folk-rock. A few years later, they contracted outside songwriting pros for frothy pop hits — briefly ruling the charts with Prince's pro-sloth "Manic Monday" and two number 1 smashes: the gooey, insecure "Eternal Flame" and the goofy novelty "Walk Like an Egyptian." Before they broke up, a rip-it-to-shreds version of Simon and Garfunkel's "Hazy Shade of Winter" provided a feverish blast of rock catharsis and proved they could be more than just pretty puppets. Their fifth (!) compilation is docked a notch for excluding the great early rockers "Live" and "Going Down to Liverpool."

ERIK HIMMELSBACH

THE SCORE >>

★★★★★

EXCELLENT. A MUST-HAVE

★★★★

GREAT. CHECK IT OUT

★★★

VERY GOOD IN ITS GENRE

★★

JUST OK

★

WEAK

BLACK UHURU

SINSEMILLA ★★

RED ★★★

THE DUB FACTOR ★★

UNIVERSAL

Conscious Jamaican vocal trio that taught British punks how to skank

While most of their reggae contemporaries were singles acts, Black Uhuru went for the more laid-back album



The Bangles endure "tepid Tuesday."

dynamic — sometimes too laid-back, as on 1980's *Sinsemilla*, where they mostly neglect their signature high, sweet harmonies in favor of two-chord vamps that go nowhere and variations on a couple of melodies. *Red*, from 1981, is more compelling, kicking off with the classic one-two of "Youth of Eglington" and "Sponji Reggae," both of which became standards among young New Wave. The group's blessing and curse was the freelance rhythm section of Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, so metronomically rock-solid that they dull

Michael Rose's passionate vocals. Still, their unflappable plod holds together the hallucinatory mixing-board odyssey of 1983's *Dub Factor*, a big influence on reggae-toned experimenters from Adrian Sherwood to Massive Attack.

DOUGLAS WOLK

GLENN BRANCA

THE ASCENSION ★★★★★

ACUTE

NYC experimentalist creates a rock symphony from guitar overload

There's more than one way to make a guitar rock, No Wave linchpin Glenn Branca determined at the turn of the '80s. On his second album, 1981's *The Ascension*, Branca teamed up four guitarists — including future Sonic Youthers Lee Ranaldo — to do what just one couldn't: marshal a cascading, vibrating sheet of feedback that built songs out of sheer force. "The Spectacular Commodity" begins with call-and-response drones, then subtly accelerates until all four instruments are rifting in vicious conflagration — and that's just the first half. The best of all is

TOO MANY COOKES

Portrait of a soul legend who sold himself short

SAM COOKE

KEEP MOVIN' ON ★★

PORTRAIT OF A LEGEND: 1951–1964 ★★

AIN'T THAT GOOD NEWS ★★

AT THE COPA ★

ABKCO

▶▶ SAM COOKE IS one of the saddest cases in American music, not just because he was shot to death at a Los Angeles motel in 1964, but also because few singers with comparable gifts ever sold themselves out so ignominiously.

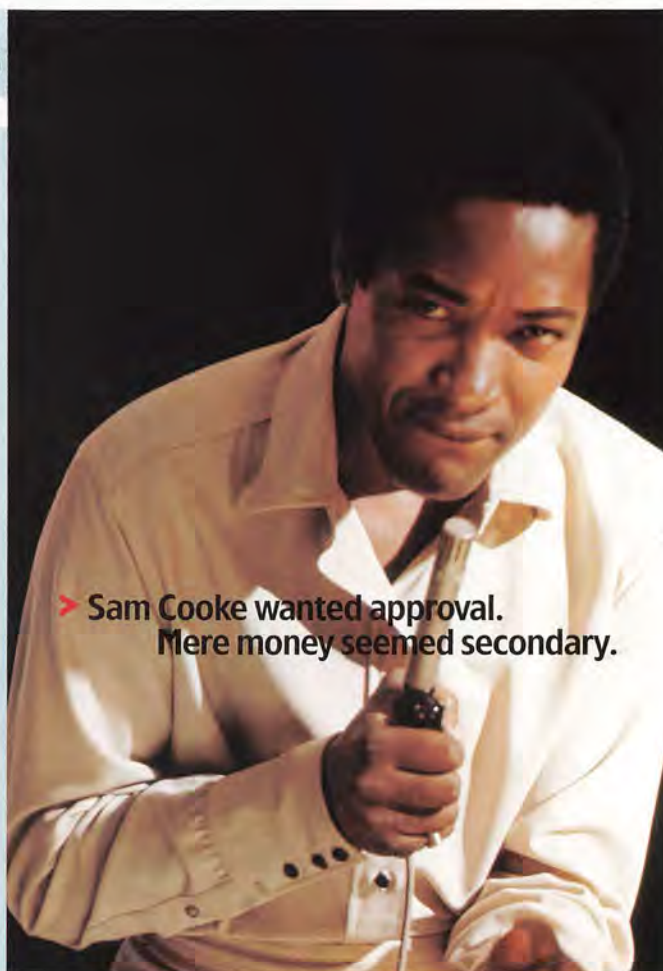
Cooke had the potential to be the quintessential soul singer, with a warm and agile voice that could switch from silk to sandpaper in a heartbeat. Otis Redding, for one, revered him — and did more satisfying versions of his songs, from the slamming "Shake" to the testifying "A Change Is Gonna Come."

Before his 1957 pop hit "You Send Me," Cooke had been a young star in the small world of gospel music with the Soul Stirrers and the Pilgrim Travelers; with a few exceptions, his gospel recordings remain his best work. Like Elvis Presley, Cooke wanted mainstream recognition and approval — as with Presley, mere money seemed secondary — and didn't much care

what crap he had to sing to get it.

Abkco Records has now reissued four Cooke CDs of mostly secular material, carefully remastered for pristine quality. The only essential one is *Portrait of a Legend: 1951–1964*, which mixes two stunning early gospel performances, "Touch the Hem of His Garment" and "Jesus Gave Me Water," with all the hits: from teen pop ("Wonderful World," "Only Sixteen") to old-smoothie balladeering ("For Sentimental Reasons") to seductive soul songs ("Bring It on Home to Me" and the Redding-like "That's Where It's At").

Most of these songs are duplicated on *Keep Movin' On* — a useless compilation — and a few also appear on *Ain't That Good News*, which has four decent if dispensable ballads, including "Falling in Love." But the most depressing artifact is *Sam Cooke at the Copa*, recorded in July 1964 and released the month he died. A nightclub orchestra backs his painful attempts to sell geriatric clap-alongs "Bill Bailey" and "Frankie and Johnny," and then-trendy folk songs, including "Blowin' in the Wind." He ends the set, not a moment too soon, with one of his all-time worst ideas, "Tennessee Waltz" in swingin' four-four time. Cooke is in such great voice for all this that it hurts the heart to hear him. DAVID GATES



▶ Sam Cooke wanted approval. Mere money seemed secondary.

From top: Joe DiWorth/RenaUK, RB Reclairs/Reina Ltd

the 13-minute title track, which careens from somber shoe-gazing to eerie spectacle to ecstatic exuberance, unified by the violence of its four-times-six strings.

JON CARAMANICA

JEFF BUCKLEY

LIVE AT SIN-É ★★

COLUMBIA

Expanded version of a 1993 EP reveals an extremely gifted show-off's roots

What we hear here (and hear and hear — for two hours and 37 minutes, counting the 11-minute DVD), in live solo performances from a tiny New York club in 1993, is a brilliant young musician hopelessly infatuated with his own virtuosity. You could hardly blame Jeff Buckley for being in awe of his own voice, which was fantastically supple and soulful and sublimely bluesy, with no apparent limit on the high end. Gleaning material from disparate inspirations, Billie Holiday to Led Zeppelin, he also shows himself to have been a remarkable guitarist — witness his exquisitely lyrical slide intro to Bob Dylan's "If You See Her, Say Hello." But Buckley, who drowned six years ago, didn't rein in his self-delight. He turns several songs into exhibitions of vocal gymnastics that have nothing to do with the lyrics; aside from singing, his second biggest gift was for meandering.

JOHN MENDELSON/JOHN

CHICAGO

CHICAGO: THE BOX ★★

RHINO

Prog-soul act from guess where turns from trumpet solos to prom themes

Rock with horns — how terribly quaint. Chicago weren't the first to bring on the brass, but they were the most commercially successful rock-soul group. This nearly seven-hour five-CD set spans three decades of adult-contemporary hits. Formed in 1968, these former Midwestern hipsters filled their first three albums, doubles all, with ambitious yet perfectly accessible jazz-rock suites, including the seven-part "Ballet for a Girl in Buchannon" and such cannily condensed Aquarian-age cousins as "Saturday in the Park" and "25 or 6 to 4." *The Box's* DVD captures the band at its boisterous 1972 apex. Peter Cetera's sexy crooning, however, gradually usurped James Pankow's arrangements. By



An excited Jeff Buckley, after placing third in a James Dean look-alike contest

their seventh Roman-numerated release, in 1974, Chicago had turned to candle-and-a-backrub pop like "Stay the Night" and "Forever," which fill this set's final three CDs.

RICHARD GEHR

DURAN DURAN

DURAN DURAN ★★

SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER ★★

CAPITOL

Reunited glamour boys raised shallowness to a fine art two decades ago

Even in the early '80s, it was hard to take Duran Duran seriously. Stars of the New Romantic movement, an even gaudier New Wave offshoot, these foppish Brits boasted grandiose hair and videos that taught MTV how to be ridiculous. The music was unerringly secondhand, especially singer Simon Le Bon's attempts to channel Bryan Ferry, which produced an unappetizing whine. These two reissues (neither with bonus tracks) show that despite their flaws, Duran Duran were an effective pop band; like Blondie, they excelled at fusing dance and rock, and skillfully imitated Chic's literate funk grooves. Their fizzy, self-titled 1981 debut includes "Girls on Film," a heartfelt ode to highly paid models. Although *Seven*

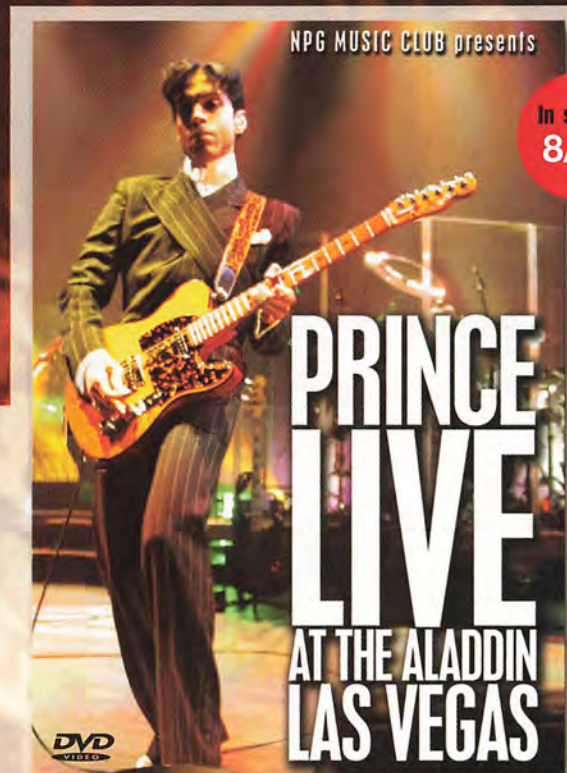


ERIC BANA
STAR OF
THE HULK

POWDERFINGER
ODYSSEY NUMBER FIVE
UPTOWN/UNIVERSAL

"It's hard to explain. They've got a classical rock sound, and the lead singer has a distinctive voice. Their structure is very, very interesting."

"PRINCE REMAINS ONE OF THE GREATEST POP PERFORMERS ALIVE, SEXY AND MENACING WITHOUT ANY OF THE AWKWARD SELF-REGARD THAT OFTEN AFFLICTS SO-CALLED LEGENDS."
—NEW YORK TIMES



BRILLIANT musician and charismatic performer, **PRINCE** has, remarkably, transfixed the pop-music world for over 20 years. Not since the Beatles has an artist's music so gracefully crossed the boundaries of nearly every popular musical genre, earning the universal admiration of musicians, the critical establishment and the record-buying public.

PRINCE'S 1ST OFFICIAL NPG MUSIC CLUB CONCERT DVD

- **LIVE CONCERT** featuring **PRINCE AND THE NPG** with special guests: **SHEILA E., MACEO PARKER, NIKKA COSTA** and **ERIC LEEDS**
- **Features PRINCE classics:** "Pop Life," "Take Me With You" and "Strange Relationship"
- **Includes covers of:** "Pass The Peas" (JB's/James Brown) "Whole Lotta Love" (Led Zeppelin)
- + **UNRELEASED TRACK "U Want Me"**

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and the *Ragged Tiger*, Duran's third album, trades eagerness for cynical efficiency, the killer chorus of "The Reflex" shows why they prospered while their competitors withered and died.

JON YOUNG

ESSENTIAL LOGIC

FANFARE IN THE GARDEN

★★★★

KILL ROCK STARS

Punk foremother who invented the power squeal

Lora Logic is the original Lisa Simpson: the class brain using every inch of her lungs to make a saxophone shriek, turning the goody-two-shoes stereo-type girls often endure into a punk stance. Starting in 1976 with X-Ray Spex, and then with her own band, Essential Logic, the former Susan Whitty became one of many righteous brats who made early punk a feminist movement, too. Her unfettered honking helped define No Wave, and her singing's great, too, all stretched syllables and trill, like that of a crazed church lady. Two discs is a lot of Logic, spanning classic early detonations like "Aerosol Burns" and "Wake Up," solo efforts and other collaborations, and recent, more polished efforts (made after Logic became a Hare Krishna). But for fans of avant sounds, it's hard to get enough of this weird heroine.

ANN POWERS

PETER FRAMPTON

THE MILLENNIUM COLLECTION

★★★

AGM

British guitar hero was bigger than Jesus in '76

For a brief moment, Peter Frampton was



Peter Frampton's guitar talks... crap.



Duran Duran await the arrival of the troop ship.

rock's golden god. The former Humble Pie guitarist parlayed good looks, fluidly melodic riffs and amiable mid-tempo rockers into the best-selling live album of all time. *Frampton Comes Alive*, from 1976, was classic arena rock, and two of its key tracks ("Show Me the Way," "Do You Feel Like We Do") bookend this hits collection. The warm *Alive* cuts, though, are surrounded by eight reasons why Frampton's phenomenal success was fleeting. The pre-*Alive* studio material is competent though unremarkable (including a flaccid "Baby I Love Your Way"), but his post-platinum efforts sound like half-baked attempts to regain the commercial magic, as he veers from maudlin pretty-boy ballads ("I'm in You") to hookless rocking with increasingly diminishing returns. Alas, Frampton came alive only once.

ERIK HIMMELSBACH

THE GITS

FRENCHING THE BULLY

BROKEN REKIDS

Reissue of a grunge-era punk band's debut is both a rebirth and a memorial

As the Gits were recording their second LP in July 1993, singer Mia Zapata was murdered, ending the Seattle punk quartet's short run. A decade later, the surviving members can savor a double serving of resolution: Zapata's alleged killer was finally arrested in January, and the band's little-known, long-missing first album is available again. Zapata's impassioned rasp and indomitable spirit are the principal assets of these 22 tunes (including nine bonus tracks). Turning water into wine is too mellow a trick for Zapata — she transmutes booze ("Another Shot of Whiskey") into 100-proof bile ("Here's to Your Fuck"). The band's fast, precise, slightly jazzy breed of punk keeps pace, but the Gits' rampaging frontwoman is the main attraction.

MARK JENKINS

THE HIGH LLAMAS

RETROSPECTIVE, RARITIES & INSTRUMENTALS

V2/ALPACA

Anglo-Irish cult pop-symphonists who might have once heard *Pet Sounds*

The "Beach Boys copycat" tag always dogged the High Llamas, but since they spent the '90s reconstructing every '66-'73 Brian Wilson gimmick except the sandbox, what did they expect — Kiss comparisons? This two-CD mix of fan favorites and obscurities also touches on exotica, Burt Bacharach and the solo work of Van Dyke Parks, but chief Llama Sean O'Hagan still comes across as more of a curator than a creator. "Glide Time" and "Nomads" boast deliciously fluffed-up arrangements, but the remote, self-conscious songwriting makes even the high points easier to admire than adore. As the sleeve notes proudly indicate, there are no love songs here, which makes this perfect for those who would prefer their Beach Boys without all that romance.

STEVE LOWE

THE HOLLIES

GREATEST HITS

CAPITOL

Garbage and gems collide on this bloated look at a classic pop band

As the sugary filling of the '60s British Invasion, the Hollies loaded up on ringing vocal harmonies and bright melodies without ever thinking real hard. They soared early on the snappy hits "Bus Stop" and "Look Through Any Window," on which brassy lead singer Allan Clarke blended gloriously with sweet, simpy Graham Nash. When Nash fled in 1968 for the (supposedly) hipper company of Crosby and Stills, the Hollies plummeted into mediocrity: The sentimental, spiritual smash "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother" only hints at the depths dredged on this two-disc, 47-song set. Adding confusion to the mix, the sequencing ignores chronology, jumbling episodes of youthful brilliance and middle-age tedium with maddening results. Inside this sprawling mess is a five-star single disc struggling to escape.

JON YOUNG

JAYHAWKS

BLUE EARTH

RESTLESS

Fringe country from when fringe country wasn't cool

Alternative-country bands have fared better burying Gram Parsons than praising him. The Jayhawks' 1989 second record, here padded with three bonus tracks, incorporated the cosmic cowboy's country harmonies and rock rhythms with a sunny exuberance that contrasted with the brooding of Uncle Tupelo, the coked-up aggression of '80s cowpunks and the SoCal sissiness of the Eagles. Mark Olson and Gary Louris's singing is lovely throughout, but their songs are earnest to a fault, with more angel references than a hymnal.

BURIED TREASURE

UNEARTHING LOST CLASSICS >>

JOE JACKSON

LOOK SHARP!

AGM, 1979



Joe Jackson sold his tie for booze!

Joe Jackson was the old man of New Wave. Though only 23, the unhandsome English singer

filled his lively, loose, highly musical debut with a crabby list of Things That Irritate Me: the media ("Sunday Papers"), apathy ("Throw It Away") and, in song after song, cute girls who ignore him ("Is She Really Going Out With Him?"). He plays his hard-boiled churlishness fast and tough, with the deepest white-reggae grooves this side of the Police, and turns the record into a self-pity party. **ROB TANNENBAUM**

"Two Angels" is memorably melodic, and an agitated guitar peppers "Commonplace Streets," but the songs suffer from sameness and a lack of the hooks that surfaced two albums later on *Tomorrow the Green Grass*, when the Jayhawks torched their inner Gram.

ANDREW DANSBY

NAUGHTY BY NATURE

THE BEST OF ★★

TOMMY BOY/RHINO

Early nostalgia alert! Here come the greatest hits of mid-'90s hip-hop

In 1991, before 50 Cent had bought his first bulletproof vest, there was a deep divide between pop-rap acts such as Tone-Loc and the angry rhetoric of N.W.A. Naughty by Nature split the difference, boasting of life on the street (e.g., demos bankrolled by drug deals) while rapping over obvious, hook-heavy samples. Their approach recalled rap's earliest days while also presaging techniques that Puff Daddy and Jay-Z honed to a science. This 16-track retrospective draws from five albums and three film soundtracks. Naughty's big hits (the great cheating anthem "O.P.P.," "Everything's Gonna Be Alright"; "Feel Me Flow") are insistent and joyful, even if they don't hold up as well as the songs they borrowed from (by the Jackson 5, Bob Marley and the Meters, respectively); the self-penned "Hip Hop Hooray" is still an ideal ghetto anthem for suburban America. The balance of *The Best Of*, however, is dragged down by the forgettable filler that bookended the group's notable hits.

ALEC HANLEY/BEMIS

THE POLYPHONIC SPREE

THE BEGINNING STAGES OF... ★★

GOOD/HOLLYWOOD

Intense 25-piece rock orchestra from Dallas gets a major-label debut

Combining the histrionics of *Godspell* with Flaming Lips-style grandeur, the Polyphonic Spree have earned a reputation as America's most uplifting live band. Leader Tim DeLaughter's nursery rhyme-simple songs are augmented by the usual rock instruments, plus harp, flute, French horn and a 10-piece choir. Throw in an irresistible positivity ("Hey! It's the sun!"), and only a curmudgeon could fail to be moved by their exuberant paeans to Mother Nature and good vibes. On record, the Spree's limitations are obvious; each song begins dreamily, then settles into an evangelical groove, and the moods vary only from happy to over the moon. DeLaughter's last band, Tripping Daisy, split up after guitarist Wes Berggren died of a heroin



The Polyphonic Spree: "OK, so you go long...."

overdose, so this unrelentingly cheery music is a bit of a personal mission. But for home listening, there's only so much happy that a guy can take. The bonus tracks — a 36-minute synth wibble that closes disc one and, on a second CD, live versions of four of the Spree's best songs — are pointless.

ANDY PEMBERTON

ELVIS PRESLEY

ELVIS: CLOSE UP ★★

RCA/BMG HERITAGE

From rockabilly cat to showbiz hack: four CDs of unheard Presley

He's been dead for 26 years, but Elvis Presley's work rate puts most living artists to shame. Following last year's slew of compilations, including the 3 million-selling *30 #1 Hits*, the King submits to yet another box set. The first disc, from his wilder pre-army days, is mostly studio outtakes, including



Naughty by Nature: There's a reason they're not called Nice by Nature.

"Jailhouse Rock." Presley liked to conduct his sessions as though they were live performances, and these versions are almost as good as their official counterparts. Then there's a disc from his Hollywood years, where the songs are as sappy as the movies. Matters improve with disc three's batch of rarities from Nashville, where Presley worked with crack sessioners on such numbers as "U.S. Male." But the last disc, from a 1972 Texas show, reveals a man growing tired of his own past. Though the scholarly sleeve notes lift it above the tacky standard of older comps, this is hardly prime Presley.

PAUL DU NOYER

SAHARA HOTNIGHTS

C'MON LET'S PRETEND ★★

JETSET

Debut from Swedish garage-pop girl group sees American shores for the first time

Today, they dress like the Strokes' foreign slacker girlfriends, but Sahara Hotnights didn't always look cool: It's hard not to chuckle at the album cover of *C'mon Let's Pretend*, from 1999, which depicts four barely post-pubescent girls playing at being blasé toughs, dwarfed by an oversize '70s convertible. Similarly, it's hard not to roll your eyes when Maria Andersson warns "I'm as cold as a razor blade" in her theatrical, Brit-accented coo-yelp — she often suggests Gwen Stefani singing Cure karaoke. Whereas 2002's *Jennie Bomb* was barreling garage-rock, *Pretend* features full-bodied pop with a New Wave sheen (the funky "Oh, Darling") and a handful of loping, plaintive moments (the forlorn "Wake Up"). Sahara Hotnights got much better when they moved to the garage.

JONAH WEINER

NINA SIMONE

ANTHOLOGY ★★

BMG HERITAGE

The genre-bending giant mixes her finest moments with a few of her most embarrassing

When she died in April, powerhouse singer Nina Simone left behind a mountain of music — part blues, jazz,

soul and pop — and *Anthology* tries to sort it out, drawing from recordings on no fewer than six labels. Disc one is a full-on masterpiece. From the tender nuances of George Gershwin's "I Loves You, Porgy" to the wickedly aggressive civil-rights protest song "Mississippi Goddam" to the swaggeringly sexual "Do I Move You?", there isn't a false step. Disc two displays Simone's talent for heedless missteps — do we need to hear her cover of Hall & Oates's "Rich Girl" or her William Shatner-like emoting on "Everyone's Gone to the Moon"? No portrait of the famously feisty performer would be complete without a few in-your-face lapses in taste. But her rich, versatile voice — as comfortable in a vulnerable whisper as in a just-short-of-strident wail — more than compensated for her thorniness.

JOHN DEFORE

THE SPINNERS

THE CHROME COLLECTION ★★

RHINO

Sublime uptown '70s soul, tediously boxed

The Spinners, fronted during the mid-'70s by the commandingly smooth tenor Philippe Wynne, were pedestrian Motown doo-wop holdovers until Thom Bell turned them into suave Philly-soul titans. Bell's brilliant vision — evident on the Spinners hits "I'll Be Around," one of the most atmospheric, rhythm-heavy records ever made, and "Then Came You," featuring Dionne Warwick — adapted to R&B the unusual harmonic colors, tones and instrumentalations of Burt Bacharach. This box set is both exhaustive and exhausting, and if you like narrative-inspired overkill, dig in: You have three endless discs. If, instead, you crave the Spinners' most stellar sounds discerningly presented, choose their original 1978 or 1990 Atlantic anthologies.

JAMES HUNTER



Elvis Presley: Will someone please give this man a lap dance!

I LOVE THIS CD!



ANNA PAQUIN
ACTRESS IN X2

I LOVE THIS CD!



NINE INCH NAILS
THE FRAGILE
NOTHING/INTERSCOPE

"When I'm calm and need to hype up, I listen to this. It gives you energy, especially first thing in the morning. It will shock you awake."

DONNA SUMMER

BAD GIRLS ★★★★★

UNIVERSAL

The Queen of Disco's great getting-it-on concept-album — now with added 12-inch action

After achieving pop's most memorable orgasm (on 1975's "Love to Love You Baby") and practically inventing techno (on 1977's "I Feel Love"), Donna Summer and synth-freak producer Giorgio Moroder retreated slightly on this 1979 double album, which hit number 1. The uplifting disco-pop side ("Hot Stuff," "Walk Away") is basically what Coco and Bruno were aiming for in *Fame*, but the melancholy Eurodisco moments ("Our Love") obviously caught New Order's imagination as well. Overall, the music is charming, but not radical or pesty enough. The superior bonus CD collects the era's 12-inch mixes; "I Feel Love" makes an awe-inspiring appearance, while the 17-minute "McArthur Park Suite" turns Jimmy Webb's melodrama into a preposterous yet spectacular Studio 54 megamix. Guess what? This disco doesn't suck.

STEVE LOWE

TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS

FUNKY KINGSTON/IN THE DARK ★★★★★

ISLAND

One CD with the two best albums from reggae's most soul-stirring singer

Anyone who has seen Toots Hibbert singing in the 1973 Jamaican gangster film *The Harder They Come* has no doubt about the raw power of his gospel shouting-style voice, and *Funky Kingston*, recorded the same year, showcases that holler at fantastic heights. The music is fierce, buoyant, dense reggae, and Hibbert repeats simple hooks over and over, building crescendos like a gospel preacher — the title track is like a private revival meeting. The more restrained *In the Dark* (1976) is country-tinged (country music has long been huge in Jamaica), allowing Hibbert to be subtle as well as strong. As a bonus, any sense of calm is raucously dispelled by the CD inclusion of the Maytals' classics "54-46 (That's My Number)" and "Pressure Drop."

LLOYD BRADLEY

IKE TURNER

BLUES KINGPINS ★★★★★

THE RIGHT STUFF/CAPITOL

Ike and his badass guitar give birth to rock & roll

Few rock & roll founders get less credit than Ike Turner, arguably the most



"Wicker ass" holds no fear for Donna Summer.

lowdown-dirty electric guitarist ever. His raucous, pre-Tina Kings of Rhythm attacked early-'50s R&B as though they were in a fight; when Turner emerged from the band with his whammy bar to solo ("The World Is Yours"), he was like the gang leader stepping ahead of his charges and flicking open his switchblade. These 18 tracks, all but one from 1952 through 1955, offer definitive southern juke-joint R&B, with Turner slashing and scorching and tenor saxes screaming. On the nearly nine-minute instrumental "All the Blues, All the Time," reportedly a demo made for Sun Records chief Sam Phillips, he burns down all the era's blues guitar styles, one after another. Tina? Tina who?

JOHN MORTLAND

VARIOUS ARTISTS

IT'S STILL WORKIN': TOMMY BOY'S CLASSIC CUTS ★★★★★

TOMMY BOY

Landmark New York hip-hop label jumbles its crates for uneven hits set

The hip-hop imprint that has been around nearly as long as rap itself (it was founded in 1981) reminisces here on its hugely influential heyday: In theory, the combo of De La Soul's happy-go-lucky "Me, Myself and I," Afrika Bambaataa's electro-rap fusion "Planet Rock" and Naughty by Nature's infectious, Jackson 5-sampling "O.P.P." sounds like bliss. But these jovial, cavorting masterpieces are sandwiched between brash interruptions — forgotten rapper Apache's sole hit, "Gangsta Bitch," Queens alley cat Noreaga's "Superthug" — and the contrast is jarring. R&B troupe Force MD's kitten-gentle "Tender Love" leads suddenly into House of Pain's riotous "Jump Around." Throwing a well-deserved party in its own honor, Tommy Boy errs by sending out way too many invitations.

ANSELMI SAMUEL

VON BONDIES

RAW AND RARE ★★

DIM MAK/IN THE ACT

Live odds and radio-session suds from Detroit garage rockers, pals of the White Stripes

Raw and Rare seems like a superfluous title for a band whose debut album, the Jack White-helmed *Lack of Communication*, made sushi seem overcooked, but it's all relative. Compared to *Raw and Rare*, culled from a hometown live show and two sessions for Britain's BBC radio, the White Stripes sound like the Dave Matthews Band. The collection reasserts the Von Bondies' white-knuckle grasp of garage-rock basics, and an extended skulk through the Sorrows' "Take a Heart" taps the same vein of mad-eyed blues juju as the White Stripes, but the no-fi production values are a drag. The closing version of "It Came From Japan" couldn't have sounded worse if it had been recorded underneath a pile of jackets in the coat-check room. Perhaps it was.

DORIAN LYNKEY

MUDDY WATERS

MUDDY "MISSISSIPPI" WATERS LIVE (LEGACY EDITION) ★★★★★

BLUES SKY/EPIC/LEGACY

Chicago blues titan flaunts his mojo on age-defying late-'70s concerts

In the twilight of his career, Muddy Waters could still scorch a stage. Born McKinley Morganfield, this former Mississippi plantation worker virtually invented electric blues in the '40s. At the time of these '77 and '78 dates, the legend was in the midst of a creative renaissance, thanks to a series of albums produced by disciple Johnny Winter, a tattooed Texas guitarist. Fronting a road band that replicates the bruising attack of his groundbreaking Chess Records combo, Waters exudes masculine swagger and sly confidence. Whether growling to a primal riff on "Mannish Boy" or unleashing slashing slide guitar on "She's Nineteen Years Old," he's thrilling and menacing at once. The second disc, containing 11 previously unreleased tracks, occasionally suffers from filler, though it adds Waters's hedonistic classic "Champagne and Reefer."

JON YOUNG

Blender Approved

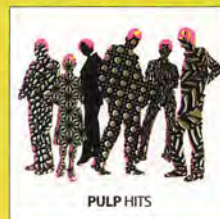
The best reissues of the last three months



DAVID BOWIE
ALADDIN SANE

VIRGIN

This 1973 *Ziggy Stardust* follow-up offers many glam masterworks, from futurist daydreams to urban nightmares, and adds excellent rarities.



PULP
HITS

ISLAND

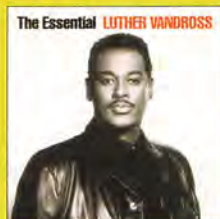
Jarvis Cocker overflows with charisma. The lanky Britpop icon spins tales of slumming rich girls and arty hipsters living fabulously on the cheap.



JAMES BROWN
IN THE JUNGLE GROOVE

UNIVERSAL

Mesmerizing full-length takes of legendary singles ("Funky Drummer," "Give It Up or Turnit a Loose") fill this long-out-of-print compilation.



LUTHER VANDROSS
THE ESSENTIAL LUTHER VANDROSS

EPIC/LEGACY

With 20 years of hits, this showcases Vandross at his strongest, striving for shimmering beauty and finding the pop center of dreamy soul.

AEROSMITH



>> In 1973, Aerosmith were five scruffy wasters from Boston living under one roof like the Monkees on drugs. Thirty years later, these hardy poster boys for the recovery movement can rightly lay claim to the title of America's Greatest Rock & Roll Band. Along the way, they toured like demons, doped themselves into oblivion, argued a lot, fell apart, cleaned up and clawed their way back into the stadium superleague. Sometimes they made records.

By Ben Mitchell

BLENDER APPROVED

TOYS IN THE ATTIC COLUMBIA, 1975

★★★★★



The berserk title track, the jaunty sleaze of "Big Ten Inch Record," the seismic "Round and Round": This is Aerosmith firing on all coke-clogged cylinders. The enduring hits "Walk This Way" and "Sweet Emotion" began here, too, while the grandiose closing ballad, "You See Me Crying," was recorded with a 109-piece orchestra, a typical '70s rock extravagance.

When preparing to record *Done With Mirrors* nine years later, lead singer Steven Tyler heard "You See Me Crying" again and liked it so much, he suggested the band do a cover. "It's us, fuckhead," guitarist Joe Perry informed him. Great times.

Standout tracks: "Toys in the Attic," "Walk This Way," "Sweet Emotion"

ROCKS COLUMBIA, 1976

★★★★★



The success of *Toys in the Attic* funded Tyler and Perry's investigations into heroin, though *Rocks* was recorded with a cocaine user's perfectionism (Tyler: "We'd do 30 takes — 40! — because we were gassed"). This is Aerosmith at their rawest, especially on the opening salvo of "Back in the Saddle," a naughty cowboy yarn, and the greasy swing of "Last Child." A touchstone for every half-decent rock album released since.

Standout tracks: "Back in the Saddle," "Last Child," "Nobody's Fault"

O, YEAH! ULTIMATE AEROSMITH HITS COLUMBIA, 2002

★★★★★



Far superior to 1980's 10-track *Greatest Hits* — which nonetheless remains Aerosmith's most successful release, with more than 10 million copies sold — this double album is the only one of many compilations that includes material from the band's entire career on both Columbia and Geffen. A pure hits collection from "Mama Kin" to "Jaded," with the new tracks "Girls of Summer" and the perfunctory "Lay It Down" thrown in. A "bonus track" version includes the overwrought soundtrack contribution "Theme From Spider-Man."

Standout tracks: "Dream On," "Walk This Way," "Janie's Got a Gun"

Aerosmith, from left: Steven Tyler, Joey Kramer, Brad Whitford, Joe Perry, Tom Hamilton



GREAT

AEROSMITH COLUMBIA, 1973

★★★★



This neglected, bluesy debut was rudimentarily produced, and earned the band instant dismissals as fake Rolling Stones. Haters overlooked the evergreen "Dream

On" — recently sampled by Eminem — and the future Guns N' Roses live staple "Mama Kin." Rife with cocksure swagger, and better tunes were to come.

Standout tracks: "Dream On," "Mama Kin"

GET YOUR WINGS COLUMBIA, 1974

★★★★



The band kicked into gear both musically and pharmaceutically: Tyler's vocals settle down to a more confident howl, while Perry and Brad

Whitford's guitars lock into the trademark Aerosmith dirty funk. They firmly establish their simple lyrical blueprint: smut and high times.

Standout track: "Lord of the Thighs"

LIVE! BOOTLEG COLUMBIA, 1978

★★★★



In the age of polished concert records, *Rolling Stone* moaned that this double album sounded as though it had been "recorded inside a shoebox." By now,

Aerosmith were all but fitted with nose bags for easier consumption of uncut Peruvian blow, but these ferocious performances include two covers — "I Ain't Got You" and "Mother Popcorn" — recorded in 1973.

Standout track: "Toys in the Attic"

PUMP GEFEN, 1989

★★★★



Opening with "Young Lust," a song Perry described as "a dinosaur eating cars," the lean, muscular *Pump* found Aerosmith drug-free and in bullish form.

The singles "Love in an Elevator" and especially "Janie's Got a Gun" reaffirmed the band's status as a world-class rock act. Aerosmith were back, but the quality would prove difficult to sustain.

Standout tracks: "Janie's Got a Gun," "Love in an Elevator," "Young Lust"

CHECK IT OUT

DONE WITH MIRRORS

GEFFEN, 1985
★★★



The re-formed original lineup's big comeback — in theory. Newly signed to Geffen but still stoned, Aerosmith launch an appealingly rough effort with no

hits — which prompted them to hire music's highest-paid song doctors. *Mirrors* and *Rock in a Hard Place* are their only studio albums that haven't sold 500,000 copies. **Standout tracks:** "Let the Music Do the Talking," "My Fist Your Face"

PERMANENT VACATION

GEFFEN, 1987
★★★



Following the disastrous *Done With Mirrors*, Aerosmith sobered up for good after their career was given a huge boost by the 1986 Run-DMC collaboration "Walk

This Way." "Don't bore us; get to the chorus" became Perry's songwriting mantra. The saccharine "Angel" hints at the balladry that would become their stock in trade.

Standout tracks: "Dude (Looks Like a Lady)," "Rag Doll," "Hangman Jury"

GET A GRIP

GEFFEN, 1993
★★★



A softer, shallower follow-up to *Pump*. Originally christened *Pitbulls on Crack* by Tyler (Perry's reply: "Get a grip"), it was Aerosmith's first number 1 album,

thanks to a trio of radio-friendly smoochers: "Crazy," "Amazing" and "Cryin'." Sales were also helped by the band's decision to step aside in videos to make way for Alicia Silverstone and Liv Tyler.

Standout tracks: "Eat the Rich," "Crazy"

A LITTLE SOUTH OF SANITY

GEFFEN, 1998
★★★



That old chestnut the contractual live album, a Geffen farewell as they returned to Columbia. As Tyler says between scorching versions of "Back in the Saddle" and

"Last Child," "You like the old shit? Where were you in '78?" Grade school, mostly. **Standout tracks:** "Last Child," "Rag Doll"

BE CAREFUL

DRAW THE LINE

COLUMBIA, 1977
★★★



While most Aerosmith records are drug albums, this is the big one. Tyler was so wasted while making it that he saw triple for the first time. A straightforward,

knocked-out rock record short on singles, with raggedy-assed, junk-fried riffs to spare.

Standout tracks: "Kings and Queens," "Milk Cow Blues," "Critical Mass"

NIGHT IN THE RUTS

COLUMBIA, 1979
★★★



The cover photo, showing the band looking like gay miners, and the title, a play on "right in the nuts," both hint at confusion. Having played on five tracks,

Perry left the band to go solo after his wife poured milk over bassist Tom Hamilton's wife. They canceled a planned arena tour because of the personnel turmoil.

Standout tracks: "No Surprise," "Chiquita"

ROCK IN A HARD PLACE

COLUMBIA, 1982
★★★



With Whitford having followed Perry out of the door, Jimmy Crespo and Rick Dufay took over on guitar. This unfocused effort wasn't helped by the band's cocaine free-

basing or Tyler's turn to opium after his heroin dealer was killed by a screwdriver to the head. Their tours found fans shouting, "Where's Joe fucking Perry?" The band was dropped by Columbia and presumed dead.

Standout tracks: "Jailbait," "Lightning Strikes," "Bolivian Ragamuffin"

PANDORA'S BOX

COLUMBIA, 1991
★★★



An exhaustive triple-CD set chronicling the band's output from the beginning — the first track is by Tyler's pre-Aerosmith outfit, Chain Reaction — through 1982's *Rock*

in a Hard Place. Taking in the hits and best album tracks as well as demos, live material and unreleased curios, this treasure trove sorts the purists from the tourists.

Standout tracks: "Helter Skelter," "Chip Away the Stone"

FOR FANS ONLY

NINE LIVES

COLUMBIA, 1997
★



Back with Columbia after signing a \$30 million deal, they were feeling pressure to deliver the goods. This muddle — every track was cowritten by professional song-

writers — became their second number 1 album. Aerosmith always performed best when caring least, but here, straining to please their bosses, they produced their most disjointed, charmless effort.

Standout tracks: "Pink," "Falling in Love (Is Hard on the Knees)"

ARMAGEDDON SOUNDTRACK

SONY, 1998
★



A tepid blockbuster with two new tracks alongside "Sweet Emotion" and "Come Together." They rightfully scored their first number 1 single with the über-ballad "I

Don't Want to Miss a Thing," but the *Nine Lives* outtake "What Kind of Love Are You On" is strictly for completists.

Standout track: "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing"

YOUNG LUST: THE AEROSMITH ANTHOLOGY

GEFFEN, 2001
★★



Expands on the leaner hits-only 1994 compilation, *Big Ones*, by including *Done With Mirrors* material as well as rare tracks such as the Doors cover "Love Me Two

Times," from 1990's *Air America* soundtrack. The 34 songs here are padded with a handful of live material of no great merit.

Standout tracks: "Deuces Are Wild," "Walk This Way"

JUST PUSH PLAY

COLUMBIA, 2001
★★



The cover looks hopelessly out of date, and the music is mediocre at best. Still, only Aerosmith would have the balls to release a song called "Avant Garden" and

also include a run from the "Walk This Way" riff on the title track. It's better than *Nine Lives*, though. **Just.**

Standout tracks: "Jaded," "Sunshine"

FURTHER LISTENING

THE JOE PERRY PROJECT
LET THE MUSIC DO THE TALKING
COLUMBIA, 1980
★★★★

The first — and best — of three back-to-basics albums Perry recorded, partly to pay off an \$80,000 room-service bill, after leaving Aerosmith. Touring was not made easy by his troublesome wife, Elissa, who once drew a line onstage behind Perry and told the Project that anyone who crossed it three times would be fired.

AEROSMITH CLASSICS LIVE!
COLUMBIA, 1986
★

A lackluster 1984 show, released by Columbia to coincide with the return of the original lineup on Geffen. Assembled without input from the band, and it shows.

CLASSICS LIVE! 2
COLUMBIA, 1987
★★

A second cash-in. Having heard the first one, Aerosmith got involved this time, and the performances — including a searing "Walk This Way" — are much improved. Still, 1978's *Live! Bootleg* is the one to go for.

Eminem looks
frantically for his
contact lens.



Homecoming King

Eminem throws his beloved Detroit a hip-hop block party, but can the world's biggest star really go home again?

EMINEM, 50 CENT AND MISSY ELLIOTT

FORD FIELD, DETROIT

JULY 12, 2003 ***

FORTY-FIVE THOUSAND people are making fun of Eminem's mom. "Fuck you, Debbie-Debbie, fuck you, Debbie-Debbie," they chant. Onstage in baggy red sweatpants and a black shirt, Eminem stands, unflinching, and raises an arm — egging them on, celebrating their sympathetic contempt for the woman he loves to hate.

There are only three things Eminem seems to love: rap, his daughter and Detroit. At the first of two consecutive sold-out concerts, Motor City's most famous white boy since Henry Ford does what he does best: turns his personal turmoil into entertainment, rapping his way through a tangle of slapstick misanthropy, vulnerability, spittle-streaming rage and —

toward his daughter — even moments of tenderness.

His set begins with a videotaped intro that shows Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick begging Eminem to play his hometown, incorporates footage from Em's recent Michael Jackson baby-dangle spoof and ends with a frenzied Hummer-ride sequence (fellow local hero Kid Rock plays a Jack Daniel's-chugging chauffeur). When the skit ends, the vehicle appears on the stadium's main floor, creeping through the crowd. Eminem leaps out, climbs onstage and launches into "Square Dance." "The bogey monster of rap/Yeah, the man's back," Shady announces, framed against a

carnival mock-up that includes a 30-foot-tall diabolical clown head and a working Ferris wheel. Hanging above it all, a glowing placard reads THE EMINEM SHOW.

He starts off masterfully, switching from nasal jabs to a deep growl to a controlled whisper, holding the mic with one hand while the other slices and touch-types at the air in time with his intricate rhythms. He moves from the swanky "Business" into a chilling rendition of "White America." The latter is all the more poignant for tonight's audience: drastically low on b-boys, high on mall girls in 50 Cent tees,

beefy dudes in tank tops and middle-aged men resting plastic cups of Budweiser on their bellies.

Between sound glitches, glaringly lip-synced moments and some draggy D12 and Obie Trice appearances, the two-hour set flattens out halfway through. Energetic as he is, Eminem lacks the actorly range that he flaunts on record and in videos — his gift for swinging maniacally between different



50 Cent surprises everyone with an enthusiastic rendition of "Kumbaya."



voices, moods and perspectives, obliterating the line between his personas and his "real self" like a hip-hop Andy Kaufman.

Tonight, he rarely drops his superserious battle-rhymer scowl, whether he's celebrating purple pills or cleaning out his closet. On "Stan," an ingenious study of his own celebrity, Eminem's delivery is supposed to get increasingly unhinged, careening drunkenly by the song's penultimate verse. But he cuts the track short after two verses, unwilling — or unable — to act out its panicked denouement.

Later in the set, the disco pulse of "Without Me" throbs through the stadium and picks up the pace. Eminem infuses "Lose Yourself" with all the drama you'd expect from an Oscar winner, and he looses his mischievous side for the early single "Just Don't Give a Fuck."

In his preceding set, 50 Cent works a bloodied brand of hometown pride. The star of Eminem's Shady Records camp begins with a

With slapstick misanthropy, Eminem turns his personal turmoil into entertainment.



Eminem and pal Proof Hummer-surf.

video sequence, too, in which a Frank Sinatra impersonator mouths the words to "New York, New York." Footage of ice skaters, stickball games and the Manhattan skyline plays in montage until, halfway through, Sinatra is gunned down, the footage turns graphically violent and 50 appears, leaping from a miniature skyscraper down to the stage in a spray of sparks.

As much as possible, 50 tries to distract the audience from his lackluster mic work, relying on his G-Unit mates to fill in the rhymes. The set's highlight comes when he and his small crew leave the stage for a preview of his new "Many Men" video, which reenacts the 2000 shooting that left him near death. As the story builds to a climax, the screens suddenly cut off and 50 reappears, lit ghoulishly from below, to finish the song alone. His best vocal turn comes during Eminem's set as he gallops through their team-up track, "Patiently Waiting" in an unusually hoarse voice. The crowd cheers 50 as

wildly as they would if he hailed from 8 Mile and not Jamaica, Queens.

Opening the show at sunset, Missy Elliott proves that musical brilliance doesn't necessarily translate to the stage. The diminutive MC seems dwarfed by the scale of the event, and her backup dancers are so stiff, it appears that their backstage Belvedere has been spiked with Botox. Restless, Elliott ends "One Minute Man" after just five seconds, and when her biggest hit, "Work It," comes on, she has already left the mic — and the stage — to run a lap around the stadium.

More than a concert, this is a celebration of civic pride. Detroiters have been lining up outside the venue since 5 A.M. — more than 14 hours before the start of the show — and all day, cars cruise downtown, windows open, blasting Slim Shady hits. Eminem has given this battered city a reason to celebrate, turning it into the center of the hip-hop universe, if only for two nights. JONAH WEINER

HOW'D YOU LIKE THE SHOW? FORD FIELD, JULY 12, 2003



ANDREA BUCHANAN

15, STUDENT, SOUTH GATE, MI

"It was fun, but 50 Cent sucked. My favorite song Eminem played was 'My Dad's Gone Crazy,' 'cause I know the words to it. I don't like any other rap."



MIRANDA WALDORF

19, STUDENT, ST. CLAIR SHORES, MI

"Eminem's so energetic, it's like, *hell yeah!* You just wanna jump onstage with him. I've seen him once before, and he was much better this time."



KIM DAVIS

37, CASINO DEALER, DETROIT

"50 Cent has got the six-pack — holla! My favorite part tonight was when he took his shirt off. I'm not really a rap fan, but I became one tonight. I enjoyed it immensely."



JOHN MARZLAK

21, STUDENT, ORLANDO, FL

"I flew all the way up from Florida for this show, and it was worth it. But I think Eminem should stick to the silly, upbeat songs live. The moody ones are too specific to him."



Metallica's James Hetfield (left) and Robert Trujillo compete to make the best "metal face."



Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst: Not quite getting the hang of the "gun thing."



Linkin Park's Chester Bennington (left) and Mike Shinoda: "We're miserable! Fashizzle!"

Reloaded

Metallica easily reclaim their title as the titans of hard rock

SUMMER SANITARIUM TOUR

GIANTS STADIUM, EAST RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY

JULY 8, 2003 ★★☆☆

JAMES HETFIELD'S vulpine grin suddenly offers something new: a relaxed friendliness. Even by Metallica's standards, the last five years have been unsettled. A feud with Hetfield chased bassist Jason Newsted from the band, and during a sabbatical, Hetfield entered alcohol rehab. The thrash kingpins have never asked for sympathy (fuck sympathy! This is Metallica — this is *war!*), but Giants Stadium suddenly seems like an AA meeting for 50,000.

"Hi, my name is James," Hetfield says with an open smile after the speed-metal mini-fantasia "Harvester of Sorrow." "And say hi to Kirk. Hello, Lars. . ."

Two weeks into the Summer Sanitarium tour, Metallica play only two songs from their new album, *St. Anger*, and draw the rest of their two-hour set from before 1992, when they set world speed records: the pummeling "Battery," followed in a tumult by "Master of Puppets," "Welcome Home (Sanitarium)," "No Remorse," "Seek and Destroy" and "Fight Fire With Fire." It has been a long day in the heat-advisory sun — four preceding bands; plenty of radio dorks winding up the crowd; not one improvisation —

and Metallica fulfill two of the crowd's urgent needs: whiplash tempos and guitar solos.

Though Metallica are punishingly short on groove and swing and sex, they're long on stamina, drive, focus and concise motion. They revel in comfortable roles: new bassist Robert Trujillo the low-end linebacker, crab-walking the stage on slow stomps; guitarist Kirk Hammett the mellow, flying-fingered Paganini in ringlets; drummer Lars Ulrich the hothead, racing to keep up with the songs (and sometimes not getting it quite perfect); Hetfield the benevolent dictator, keeper of the riffs.

The crowd's hands haven't been in the air for much of the rest of the day. The theme of Limp Bizkit's show is the general distemper that lead singer Fred Durst feels is aimed toward him. But this is a genuinely boring subject just shy of megalomania. For a significant show at a critical point in the band's career, Durst becomes a



The Deftones' Chino Moreno: "Everyone out there who's deaf, raise your hand."

time-waster supreme: At mid-set, he leaves the band idle and performs a pitiful no-rhythm-section version of the Who's "Behind Blue Eyes." (Yes, that's right: "No one knows what it's like/To be hated.")

Linkin Park are rock by the numbers: Teen-voiced singer Chester Bennington the walking representative of emo, all skin, bones and tattoos; Mike Shinoda the take-charge rapper (even freaking southern rhyme styles to make it doper); a barely audible DJ; distorted guitars behind the money lines; lots of inner pain. With the kind of patter usually heard from car salesmen, they deliver a flagrant emotionalism the crowd loves, boosting choruses to the sky (so effectively, in fact, that *Blender* suspects they were using backing tracks).

By contrast, the Deftones seem to be building from the ground up, pushing through the murk, not knowing how it'll all come out. Part of singer Chino Moreno's inventiveness is his lack of a particular style; he seems unscripted, and in the new song "Bloody Cape," he swings from crooned long notes to conversation-tone blankness to jagged screams. Mudvayne, opening the day in mid-afternoon without their customary face paint, seem like a relic after two albums: Not even jazzy bass playing can save yesterday's aggro funk-metal.

While all the other bands sing Metallica's praises, Metallica sing the crowd's. "You make Metallica feel good, baby!" Hetfield says before they begin their touching 10-minute ritual of walking back and forth across the lip of the stage to survey their supplicants, reaffirming their status as metal's superior band. **BEN RATLIFF**

BLENDER'S PROMOTIONAL SECTION

GUEST LIST

COMPETITIONS, EVENTS AND OTHER FUN STUFF
WE THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

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The tour will cover 25 cities across North America beginning August 4 in Los Angeles and ending in late September in the Pacific Northwest. Keep a close eye on nintendofusion-tour.com and blender.com for tour details and a chance to win a trip to the



closing show — plus other great prizes from Nintendo, Circuit City and *Blender*. Tickets are now available for the first select cities at ticketmaster.com.



PRESENTS
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AUSTIN CITY LIMITS MUSIC FESTIVAL

Find out why Austin is the live-music capital of the world. Last year, more than 75,000 fans from around the country enjoyed this great event. This year will be even bigger and better, with more than 100 artists performing. *Blender* magazine is going to give you and a friend the chance to see this amazing three-day festival, where you'll listen to **R.E.M.**, **Ben Harper** and the **String Cheese Incident**, to name just a few. To win tickets to this outstanding festival, log on to blender.com/contests/austincitylimits.



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➤ Horror fans should get in line now for a film that redefines *skin-crawling*.



THE GOOD!

GORE WINS!

If you go into the woods today . . . you are so screwed. By Clark Collis

CABIN FEVER

DIRECTED BY Eli Roth

STARRING Jordan Ladd, Rider Strong, James DeBello, Cerina Vincent, Joey Kern

➤➤ WHILE THE Environmental Protection Agency doesn't publicize the amount it pays Hollywood to make films that ensure our forests remain free of hormonally crazed youngsters, one can only conclude that it runs into the millions. Indeed, from Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* through this summer's *Wrong Turn*, Tinseltown's message has been clear: If there's a teddy bears' picnic in the woods today, it won't be too long before the poor furry bastards are being hideously tortured, butchered or, at best, anally assaulted by toothless, inbred hicks ("Squeal, little stuffed animal, *squeal!*").

Rarely, however, has the kids-in-the-woods genre been attacked with the sheer insane gusto demonstrated by Eli Roth, whose debut feature, *Cabin Fever*, asks how five college kids would cope if they came across a horribly diseased, psycho-looking dude in the middle of nowhere. The answer — and we're not really giving anything away here — is badly.

First, they set fire to the guy. Then, when one of them also becomes infected with his disease (it turns out to be an Ebola-like flesh-eating virus), they freak out and lock her up. Sadly, by then, the corpse of the fried dude has fallen into the local drinking reservoir, with

fairly predictable consequences vis-à-vis anyone getting home in time for *The Bachelor*.

The result, which was midwived by an uncredited David Lynch, does betray Roth's inexperience, with sequences of farcical humor often sitting uneasily amid the relentless gore. But the same could be said of *The Evil Dead* — a film that was clearly a huge influence on Roth, but one he often trumps with *Cabin Fever*'s pure schlock horror.

Certainly, any gore-phobes who are uninterested in seeing what happens when a woman suffering from a flesh-eating virus attempts to shave her legs would be well-advised to follow the example of at least one appalled *Blender* staffer and leave well before the halfway mark. But horror fans should start getting in line now for a film that redefines the term *skin-crawling* in more ways than even they might care to imagine.

"SQUEAL LIKE A PIG!"

Five other cinematic reasons to stay clear of the woods

DELIVERANCE

Four canoeists venture into the woods — with terrifying, fucked-in-the-ass consequences.



Deliverance: "Hey, can't we just go out for a coffee first?"

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT

Three documentary filmmakers venture into the woods — with terrifying, magic-related consequences.

WRONG TURN

Five twentysomethings venture into the woods — with terrifying, made-into-stew consequences.

SOUTHERN COMFORT

A bunch of reservists venture into the woods — with terrifying, Vietnam War-allegorizing consequences.

STUART LITTLE 2

James Woods lends his voice to animated rodent flick — with terrifying, what-the-hell-happened-to-my career? consequences.



Cabin Fever: "No cable? Argh!"

The Everett Collection (Deliverance), Steve Granitz/WireImage.com (Woods), Brand X/Creatas (leaves)



THE BAD!

SLAP HER... SHE'S FRENCH

DIRECTED BY Melanie Mayron

STARRING Piper Perabo, Jane McGregor, Michael McKean, Trent Ford

NOT, SADLY, another triumph of Gallic S&M cinema. To secure a pageant-queen title, Texas high-school airhead McGregor announces that her family will sponsor a French foreign-exchange student (*Coyote Ugly's* Perabo). She soon comes to regret this decision when the beret-wearing Perabo sets about stealing her boyfriend and — have they *no* morals in Frogland? — her place on the cheerleading team. While no film featuring *Spinal Tap's* Michael McKean (particularly as a lecherous French teacher) can be all bad, this comes uncomfortably close.



& THE INDIE!

LOST IN TRANSLATION

DIRECTED BY Sofia Coppola

STARRING Scarlett Johansson, Bill Murray, Anna Faris, Giovanni Ribisi

A PAST-HIS-PRIME American movie star (Murray) comes to Tokyo to shoot a TV commercial, where he meets fellow Yank Johansson, an unemployed recent college grad who has been left to cool her heels while her photographer husband (Ribisi) works. Bonding over their jet lag and floundering marriages, the pair venture out to explore the city and stave off alienation, if only for a few days. The story occasionally feels lightweight, but Tokyo looks positively magical, and Murray's improvisations and world-weary karaoke rendition of Roxy Music's "More Than This" are a joy to behold.

Blender Approved

The best movies of the last three months



THE HULK

Deft references and much better effects than you've been told. Ang Lee drills through the genre to find green gold!



SEABISCUIT

Finally, an actor who doesn't insist on looking tall onscreen! Tobey Maguire rides a long-shot to a photo finish.

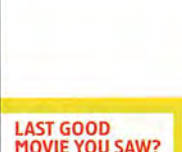


LAST GOOD MOVIE YOU SAW?



EVE

Head honey in the Ruff Ryders rap stable



SHALLOW HAL

"Shallow Hal. Jack Black acts the fool. He's hilarious, but he's always so cute when he goes off. The whole movie was a trip."

AND THE REST...



MATCHSTICK MEN

DIRECTED BY Ridley Scott

STARRING Nicolas Cage, Sam Rockwell, Allison Lohman

THE PITCH A con man with compulsive disorders discovers he has a teenage daughter while planning the biggest scam of his career.

THE VERDICT Hit-or-miss king Cage hits this time as the quirkiest criminal ever, and Lohman shines as his born-to-grift offspring in Scott's first comedy since *Thelma and Louise*.



THIRTEEN

DIRECTED BY Catherine Hardwicke

STARRING Evan Rachel Wood, Nikki Reed, Holly Hunter

THE PITCH A straight-A student (Wood) is led by her wilder girlfriend (Reed) to explore sex, drugs and other no-nos.

THE VERDICT A portrait of modern adolescence starring actual teens; 14-year-old star Reed cowrote the autobiographical script. It wowed 'em at Sundance, deservedly so.



PARTY MONSTER

DIRECTED BY Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato

STARRING Macaulay Culkin, Seth Green, Chloë Sevigny, Dylan McDermott

THE PITCH The story of Michael Alig, convicted murderer and self-proclaimed "king of the club kids" who ruled over New York's drug-fueled disco scene during the '80s.

THE VERDICT Seeing Culkin play a flamboyantly gay, coke-addicted impresario is a hoot, but the film is stolen by *Austin Powers's* Green.



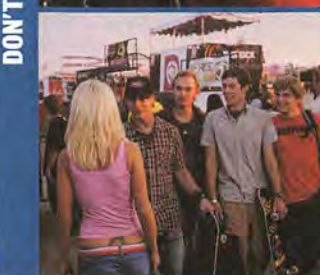
MARCI X

DIRECTED BY Richard Benjamin

STARRING Lisa Kudrow, Damon Wayans, Christine Baranski, Richard Benjamin

THE PITCH A Jewish American Princess inherits a rap label from her father, and through controversial artist Dr. Snatchcatcha (Wayans), learns to get in touch with her inner bad self.

THE VERDICT A subpar entry in the well-trod "white folks are uptight/black folks are all right" genre best left to Chris Rock, if anyone.



GRIND

DIRECTED BY Casey La Scala

STARRING Mike Vogel, Adam Brody, Joey Kern

THE PITCH Unable to join a professional skateboarding team, three high-school friends decide to start their own.

THE VERDICT A male skateboarding version of *Blue Crush*. Fans will dig the pro tricks, but even cameos from Jackasses Bam Margera and "Wee Man" Acuña can't overcome the by-the-numbers plotting — or dearth of bikinis.



DEMONLOVER

DIRECTED BY Olivier Assayas

STARRING Connie Nielsen, Chloë Sevigny

THE PITCH A corporate double agent (Nielsen) attempts to sabotage her company's bid to corner the market in virtual-reality porn.

THE VERDICT Filled with zombieified acting and barn-size plot holes, this convoluted critique of high-tech consumer culture would be hard to take seriously even if it wasn't guilty of the same crimes it slams.

Yoshio Sato/Focus Features (Lost in Translation); The Kobal Collection (The Hulk); courtesy of Universal Studios and Dreamworks LLC (Seabiscuit); Jim Spellman/Wetnape.com (Evel); Francois Duramel/Warner Bros. Pictures (Matchstick Men); Anne Marie Fox (Thirteen); The Kobal Collection (Party X); Dale Robinson/Warner Bros. Pictures (Grind); Palm Pictures (Demonlover)



The Family Guy:
No, their chins
are not testicles!

FULL HOUSE

The depraved cartoon that made *The Simpsons* look like *Leave It to Beaver* gets a new lease on life. By Clark Collis

THE FAMILY GUY

CREATED BY
Seth MacFarlane

STARRING
Seth MacFarlane, Seth Green, Alex Borstein
TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★★★

ON LAST YEAR'S *Simpsons* Halloween special, Homer discovered that his hammock had magical cloning properties, and soon Springfield was overrun with fat, slothful Homer-alikes. One clone looked suspiciously like Peter Griffin, the fat, slothful paterfamilias of the animated Fox series *The Family Guy*.

The joke was cruel, particularly at the expense of a show that had just been canceled.

But it does, at first glance, seem justified — given that, just like *The Simpsons*, *The Family Guy* hilariously tracked the (mis)adventures of a suburban family with a habit of bursting into song. Like the *Simpsons*, the Griffins had three kids, even if *The Family Guy*'s toddler, the

villainous, Mom-hating Stewie, could not be further from cuddly, mute Maggie Simpson.

And where the *Simpsons* have supernice Ned Flanders as a neighbor, the Griffins had Quagmire, not just a loathsome "ladies' man" but some sort of sexual offender (in one of the early episodes, Quagmire chillingly cites "Megan's Law" as the reason he can't baby-sit the Griffin offspring — before, even more chillingly, doing so anyway).

While *The Simpsons*, for all its biting satire, has a warm fuzziness at its center, *The Family Guy* had a heart of evil — or, more generously, of unadulterated misanthropy.



"Ha ha! A crudely drawn tomahawk!"

The amazing thing is not that Fox pulled the plug but that it stuck so long with a show that reveled in such sights as Peter getting in touch with his feminine side by forcing a half-conscious Stewie to suckle on his nipple.

But for those who prefer their comedy blacker than black, this second collection of *Family Guy* episodes — which includes the never-broadcast "When You Wish Upon a Weinstein" — will be a treat, as well as further evidence that the show was not a *Simpsons* rip-off at all, but rather a deranged refinement.

The Family Guy
had a heart of pure
misanthropy.



CASABLANCA

WARNER HOME VIDEO

★★★★★

How odd that a film that stars Humphrey Bogart, is set during World War II, takes place largely in a bar and is almost as funny as *Caddyshack* has a reputation as a chick flick. The truth is that if you don't like *Casablanca*, you only think you like movies — and if you've never seen it, this extras-stuffed sixtieth-anniversary two-disc edition is the perfect way to rectify that appalling oversight.



Casablanca: Can you tell which character is the villain?

onscreen adversary: "God bless America — and no place else!" The DVD includes commentary from Rock.

THE CORE

PARAMOUNT HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★

The Core follows the adventures of Hilary Swank's band of "terrabouts" as they are sent underground when Earth's core stops revolving and ... whoa, Earth's core *revolves*? How interesting. A damn sight more interesting, in fact, than anything else in this leaden sci-fi actioner. Diabetics be warned: There is a subplot involving cute whales.

DAREDEVIL

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★

It could be said that superhero-wise, Ben Affleck drew the short straw with Daredevil's blind "Man Without Fear." On the other hand, Daredevil himself probably wasn't too thrilled about being portrayed by Affleck's stiff "Man Without Much Acting Ability." Either way, the only reasons to see this are Jennifer Garner, as the ass-kicking love interest, and Colin Farrell, as the gloriously over-the-top villain. This two-disc set includes Garner's screen test.

DAVID KATZ

HEAD OF STATE

UNIVERSAL HOME VIDEO

★★★★

The idea of a black presidential candidate is so ripe with comic potential that you wonder why no one has made a film about it before. Less surprising is that *Head of State*'s moving force is writer-director-star Chris Rock, who marries his white-people-do-this, black-people-do-that schtick with a nicely cutting satirical edge, most notably in the slogan of his (white)



Daredevil: "Jeez — these outfits J.Lo makes we wear! Damn!"

THE HUNTED

PARAMOUNT HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★

When special-ops hit man Benicio Del Toro whacks a couple of deer hunters, Tommy Lee Jones is on his tail before you can say, "Hey, isn't this just what happened in *Rambo*?" And while we're at it, is there really no actor in Hollywood capable of pursuing a

fugitive other than Tommy Lee Jones?" Based on real characters (sort of), William Friedkin's thriller knows a lot about tracking but substantially less about holding onto its audience's attention past the halfway mark. The DVD includes Friedkin's commentary and six deleted scenes.

THE KID STAYS IN THE PICTURE

WARNER HOME VIDEO

★★★★★

Actor. Studio chief. Cokehead. Lover of

more beautiful women than most of us will ever see. Few people have lived life quite as fully as Robert Evans, whose rise, fall and comeback (if you count producing *Sliver* and *The Saint* a comeback) are depicted in this fabulous documentary, narrated by Evans himself. Though the movie has already been screened on TV, this DVD boasts numerous extras, including director's commentary and featurettes.

PHONE BOOTH

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★

An exercise in Hitchcockian suspense that writer Larry Cohen first suggested to Hitch back in the late '60s, *Phone Booth* finds sleazy publicist (is there really any other kind?) and sniper target Colin Farrell trapped in the titular communications center for almost the entire film. If not technically "good," the film has a nicely weird '70s feel and also comes equipped with commentary from director Joel Schumacher.

THE REAL CANCÚN

NEW LINE HOME ENTERTAINMENT

★★★

Why would moviegoers pay good money to see "real people" — e.g., one Jeff Spicoli type, some date rapist-looking dudes and a whole lot of drunk women — when they could get the same thing free on TV? Answer: They wouldn't. In fact, this audience-repelling big-screen revamp of the *Real World*



The Kid Stays in the Picture's Ali MacGraw and Robert Evans (Evans's 800-pound bag of cocaine not pictured)



The Real Cancún: Someone didn't follow the washing instructions on the tag.

format has precious little additional to offer besides some too-hot-for-TV raunch and the very rare bon mot: "If you've got a small dick, then my favorite position is with another motherfucker."

Blender Approved

The best DVDs of the last three months



THE BILLY WILDER COLLECTION

MGH/UA HOME VIDEO

Learn all you ever need to know about comedy from this extras-packed set, paying special attention to classics *The Apartment* and *Some Like It Hot*.



IF I SHOULD FALL FROM GRACE

MVD

The troubled life of Shane MacGowan, the Pogues' brilliant founder — from teenage nervous breakdown to present-day dipsomania — laid bare.

MUSIC DVDS BY ROB KEMP



THE OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST

BBC WORLDWIDE

★★★★★

The brief of *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, a '70s BBC music show, was to film the world's top live acts while they played for however long they wanted (legend has it that on a quiet night, you can still hear Little Feat jamming away in some long-abandoned London studio). The performances, from classic rockers (John Lennon, Tom Petty) and then-young turks (Blondie, R.E.M.) rarely disappoint, but more fun is in the extras, particularly interviews with Robert Plant, Mick Jagger and a barely conscious Keith Richards.



VARIOUS ARTISTS THE DIRECTORS LABEL: SPIKE JONZE

PALM PICTURES

★★★★★

This first in a series of director-compiled DVDs has 17 videos, including the '70s cop show montage of the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage" and Fatboy Slim's "Praise You," in which mail-order-catalog-fortune heir Adam Spiegel, a.k.a. Spike Jonze, leads an incompetent interpretive-dance troupe.



TENACIOUS D THE COMPLETE MASTERWORKS

EPIC

★★★★★

Included here with every episode of the cult HBO series that launched the career of roly-poly renaissance man Jack Black is an uproarious behind-the-scenes tour doc depicting much fart-lighting and pantomimed anal sex courtesy of the self-proclaimed "greatest band on Earth."



SAM COOKE: LEGEND

AMERICAN

★★★★★

Shot to death at 33 as, half-naked, he chased an unwilling conquest from his motel room, Cooke's undignified end stands in sharp contrast to the aching beauty of the soul legend's voice. Proof of his genius can be found on this 70-minute DVD, which contains never-before-seen performances, TV footage and interviews.



SLAYER: WAR AT THE WARFIELD

UNIVERSAL

★★★

If your idea of great fun is 2,300 fans going bananas as this 18-year death-metal institution hurtles through 19 indistinguishable maelstroms during a 2001 show at San Francisco's Warfield Theatre — culminating with "Angel of Death," Slayer's graphic dirge about Nazi butcher Josef Mengele — then you're in for a treat!



CARPENTERS: INTERPRETATIONS

A&M

★★★

This collection of listless, corny TV variety-show performances of 11 of the Carpenters' saccharine yet poignant '70s hits lacks even kitsch appeal — unless you count watching in distress as singer Karen becomes ever more skeletal as she succumbs to the anorexia nervosa that ultimately killed her in 1983.



Van the Man:
"Git out of me way,
ya bleedin' idjit."

FOREST GRUMP

Why is genius Van Morrison such an asshole? A new biography sheds no light on the old question. By Paul Du Noyer

CAN YOU FEEL THE SILENCE? VAN MORRISON: A NEW BIOGRAPHY

By Clinton Heylin

CHICAGO REVIEW PRESS, \$28

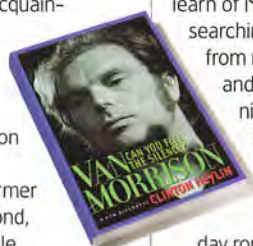
★★★

IF, AS HE CLAIMS, author Clinton Heylin really is "a self-confessed curmudgeon and part-time misanthrope," he's surely the guy to profile Van Morrison. There are two things with which every acquaintance of "Van the Man" agrees: First, that when the inspiration strikes him, Morrison can be the most spellbinding performer on Earth. And second, that he's a miserable, cantankerous grouch. Inevitably, Morrison did not cooperate with Heylin for this book.

That's a pity. Morrison roared out of Belfast, Northern Ireland, 40 years ago with the garage-band standard "Gloria" and the timeless radio favorite "Brown Eyed Girl." He followed with a slew of albums, some of which —

Astral Weeks and *Moondance*, notably — are among the best of all time. Since then, he has blended soul, jazz and Irish folk music in a restless quest for spiritual insight. The results have been uneven, and lately they have been dire. But his story cries out to be told.

Heylin spoke to many former associates of the singer and analyzed his every lyric, studio outtake and live performance tape. Nobody can doubt his attention to the music. We also learn of Morrison's spiritual searching, which has taken him from mysticism to Scientology and now, reportedly, nihilism. Heylin relates stories of his stormy marriage to a hippie model named Janet Planet and his latter-day romance with an Irish beauty queen. But there is a big, empty space at the heart of this book where Van Morrison should be. He is legendarily tight-lipped, and nobody quoted here can do more than guess at his motivations. Ultimately, *Can You Feel the Silence?* is as distant and speculative as a backpacker's guide to the moon.



ACCORDING TO THE ROLLING STONES

By Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts & Ronnie Wood

★★★★ CHRONICLE BOOKS, \$40

Outdoing even the best Stones biographies, this official publication is crammed with never-before-seen photos and has Charlie Watts as its consulting editor. Presented in the band's own words, the book hardly suffers from the lack of an outside writer's critical eye, with the Rolling Stones themselves candidly recounting their 40 years on the road. It's the photos, though, that are the real coup here: family snapshots and revealing tour photos plot fabulous fashion atrocities, drug-related deterioration and a band generally growing old disgracefully — all except dapper consulting editor Charlie, of course.

DANIEL KRAUSS

BJÖRK: WOW AND FLUTTER

By Mark Pytlik

★★ ECW PRESS, \$18

The clue is in the foreword. Canadian journalist Mark Pytlik's respect for his uninterviewed subject is so overwhelming, he decides that "the only way I could write this book is if I felt it could be honest without being salacious, insightful without being exploitative." So instead, we get a conscientious plod through the biography of one of pop's most compelling practitioners. How her various boyfriends (including Tricky, Goldie and now avant-garde artist Matthew Barney) affected her, what she was thinking when she punched a TV journalist in Bangkok's airport or how she felt about the crazy fan who sent her a bomb and then videotaped himself blowing his brains out: All remain a mystery. The only time the bone-dry narrative catches fire is on the set of Lars Von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark*: The tantrums between the auteur and the headstrong rock star cause a producer to call the film "the worst experience of my life." A track-by-track breakdown of Björk's every song at the back does little to enliven this snoozy cut-and-paste job.

ANDY PEMBERTON



HOW TO DJ RIGHT THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PLAYING RECORDS

By Frank Broughton and Bill Brewster

★★★★ GROVE PRESS, \$15

DJs don't command quite the esteem they once did, but as long as nights out are ruined by ham-fisted mixing and intolerably dull "journeys into sound," this enormously helpful book will be doing a public service. *How to DJ Right* has all the virtues of an instruction manual — step-by-step guides, diagrams, idiot-proof explanations — but also offers good advice on how to find records, build a career and not bore the crowd senseless. Marquee names offer useful tidbits (Fatboy Slim suggests buying '70s records based on the size of the artist's hair), and the authors pepper every chapter with dry Anglocentric wit (a guide to record store—speak explains that nicely minimal means unbelievably boring). For any aspiring decksmith, this is indispensable.

DORIAN LYNESKEY



SWAG: ROCK POSTERS OF THE '90s

By Spencer Drate

★★★★ ABRAMS, \$30

A bulbous fertility statue stands with an electric guitar slung from its neck, backed by fallopian tube-patterned wallpaper; above, the words THE BREEDERS stretch in block letters. Welcome to the vivid, lewd world of '90s rock posters. This tome contends that the '90s, "sandwiched between the glitz of glam rock and the bombast of bling-bling," offered this underground art form a wildly fertile period. The curation pretty much begins and ends there, leaving us at sea with 250 posters of indies and alt-rockers. Certain designs leap from the stew: Art Chantry's pulp mock-ups, Roger Dean's hyper-dweeb fantasy-scapes and Sériographie Populaire's warm minimalism. In the latter's work, band names are buried, making it explicit that rock posters aren't necessarily parasitic, but meaningful independent artworks.



JONAH WEINER

THE U2 READER

A QUARTER CENTURY OF COMMENTARY, CRITICISM AND REVIEWS

Compiled and edited by Hank Bordowitz

☆☆☆ HAL LEONARD, \$18

Cherry-picking 25 years of press coverage of a band as divisive as U2 is no easy gig — and, as such, this anthology offers a mixed bag. Sure, *The U2 Reader* has big-name contri-

butions — Elizabeth Wurtzel dissecting *Achtung Baby* for *The New Yorker*; Salman Rushdie recalling a pogoing session with Van

Morrison in Bono's living room — and profiles cribbed from everything from *Time* to *Star Hits*. But do we really need seven pages of Adam Clayton's droning 2000 interview with *Bass Player*? Inevitably, Bono steals the show with his one-liners, pointing out to an interviewer who notes that at least U2 never claimed to be bigger than Jesus: "No. Jesus has made us big."

TOM DOYLE

WOULDN'T IT BE NICE
BRIAN WILSON AND THE MAKING OF THE BEACH BOYS' PET SOUNDS

By Charles L. Granata

☆☆☆ CHICAGO REVIEW PRESS, \$16

Wouldn't It Be Nice applies close musical and cultural analysis to the Beach Boys' 1966 masterpiece. Occasionally, such microscopic scrutiny dispels rather than bolsters the album's mystique. You can read only so many straight-faced comparisons of the group's backing vocals — especially "Duh-duh, do-duh-duh's" — before going postal. The book is far better when

THE COLONEL

THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF COLONEL TOM PARKER AND ELVIS PRESLEY

By Alanna Nash

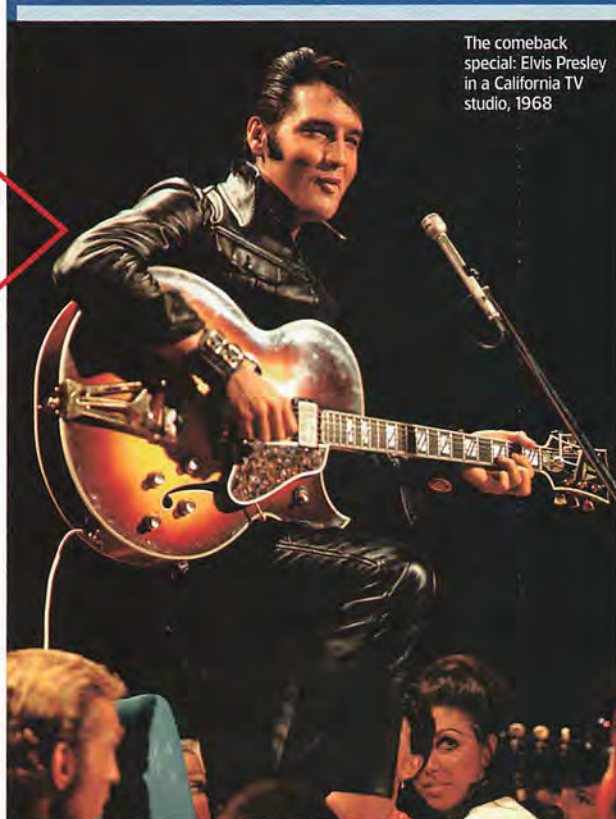
☆☆☆ SIMON & SCHUSTER, \$25

A former carny and con man, Elvis Presley's manager, Colonel Tom Parker, once buried a pony up to its knees and claimed it was the "world's smallest horse." He buried Elvis's talents, too, with a relentless string of self-serving deals, lame-ass movies (er, *Tickle Me*), schlocky Vegas gigs and drugs. Though her disgust is at times obvious, Nash, a *New York Times* writer, tries to be evenhanded, exploring the Colonel's twisted psychology, gambling addiction, spasms of conscience and secret identity (he was a Dutch immigrant and, Nash claims, a possible murderer). Alas, her thoroughness occasionally bogs down an otherwise eye-popping account of one of rock's sickest business relationships.

DALE HRABI

discussing the mid-'60s life of Brian Wilson. It's as heart-breaking as the songs on *Pet Sounds*: a lonely young man going mad as he tries to make the greatest album in rock history.

JAMES SLAUGHTER



The comeback special: Elvis Presley in a California TV studio, 1968

THE BEST PART OF A BIG BOOK!

After years of making embarrassingly cutesy G-rated movies, a pent-up Elvis Presley lets loose in more ways than one for his 1968 TV comeback special

➤➤ IN HIS FIRST real performance in seven years, Elvis hit a level he had not found since his seminal Sun recordings. Although visibly nervous — his hand shook at the start — he joked and bantered about the highlights of his career in a way that both revalidated his achievements and rendered him fresh. And when he launched into the rockabilly and blues that fueled the engine of his life, his energy blazed raw, stark, and palpable, his voice showing a tough exuberance, his looks telegraphing a hint of cruelty.

By the time he taped the arena segment two days later, he'd summoned such confidence that he resembled not so much a man, but a panther, feral in his sleek

black leather suit, growling, groaning, shaking, and strutting across the stage.

The beauty of the special was in watching the metamorphosis take place. But there may have been more to it. After the first performance, when [producer Bones] Howe remembers they had to peel the suit away — "nobody had thought that he'd be so soaking wet you couldn't get it off" — costumer Bill Below reported to [director Steve] Binder that they had a problem. Elvis had experienced a sexual emission on stage.

From *The Colonel: The Extraordinary Story of Colonel Tom Parker and Elvis Presley*, by Alanna Nash. Copyright © 2003 by Simon & Schuster. Reprinted with permission.



Colonel Tom Parker: Mr. 110 percent!

"Nobody had thought that you couldn't get the suit off."

**Blender Approved**

The best books of the last three months

**BOOGALOO**

By Arthur Kempton

PANTHEON BOOKS, \$28

A stylish and ambitious history of American soul music, from gospel to rhythm & blues to funk to rap.

**A LESTER BANGS READER**

Edited by John Morthland

RANDOM HOUSE, \$15

A welcome second helping from Bangs, rock's druggy bozo savant.



The Atkins Diet really isn't as limited as people think.

SEE SPOT DIE

Killer rabbits, bloodthirsty dog-monsters — who says the suburbs are boring? By Alex Porter

SILENT HILL 3

KONAMI — PS2, PC

★★★★

➤ PUBERTY IS unpleasant enough by itself, but what if instead of dealing with clueless parents and snobbish cliques, your after-school activities included evading a now-you-see-him, now-you-don't stalker clad in a bloodstained bunny suit? And instead of a bustling Orange Julius and Hot Topic boutique, your local mall was riddled with dark, empty corridors and dead ends? Such is the world of Silent Hill 3's teen protagonist, Heather.

Set in a town with all the charm of Atlantic City, New Jersey, in February, your descent into a nightmarish realm begins

as a typical day at the mall. As Heather, you flee an icky old guy in an overcoat, getting lost in a confusing maze of deserted shops and passageways. The story grows so weird, it's impossible to tell if your character is dead, alive or dreaming, or if someone has dosed your Slurpee.

Bandaged dog-things with split heads, half-human mannequins and other predators close in. To survive, you'll need to find a map, flashlight, knife and, eventually, automatic weapons.

A dissonant, grating score, clanging steam pipes and inhuman screeches keep your nerves jangled. And deliberate or not, the sometimes clunky controls heighten the panicky sense of powerlessness. Call Scooby all you want — you're doomed.

KILL THE WABBIT!

These bunnies must be turned into stew, too

IRASCIBLE!
Monty Python and the Holy Grail

The rabbit of Caerbannog, cute ball of fur or King Arthur-terrorizing death machine? (Clue: it's the latter.)

MUTATED!
Night of the Lepus

This science-fiction film from 1972 proves that rabbits do not become any less annoying when they're blown up to the size of bears.

CATAclysmic!
Donnie Darko

News of apocalypse is no more palatable coming from a six-foot carrot-muncher named Frank.



BACKYARD WRESTLING

EIDOS INTERACTIVE — PS2, XBOX

Card tables, concertina wire and cheese graters are at your disposal in this suburban bloodbath in which you play disaffected teens grappling, punching and generally beating the snot out of one another (at least until Mom comes home). The play is decent, stoopid fun, but unless you're a fan of the Insane Clown Posse (whose music and playable likenesses appear in the game), don't try this at home — or anywhere else, for that matter. ★★



CHARLIE'S ANGELS

UBISOFT — PS2, GAMECUBE

In this blatant attempt to cash in on the movie franchise, players in the guise of Natalie, Dylan and Alex move stiffly around international locales fending off junkyard dogs, shotgun-wielding security guards and other undistinguished thugs who protect your target, the Thin Man. As in the movie, the Angels break neither sweat nor nail while dispatching bad guys. The voices of Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz and Lucy Liu are in it — but not their hearts. ★



F-ZERO GX

NINTENDO — GAMECUBE

Methedrine-fueled, super-duper vehicle racing on futuristic, gravity-defying courses full of loops, vertical drops and upside-down stretches. Experience a sense of brain-squishing speed as you bump into one of the hovering super cars in Story Mode as the noble Captain Falcon. Or race against other players as one of 30 additional characters in straightforward, graphically polished contests. F-Zero GX is a simple, twitchy, barf-inducing gas. ★★★★★



MAFIA

GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS — PS2, XBOX

It's the 1930s, and you've been recruited by the mob. Work your way up the syndicate ladder from foot soldier to hitman to zoot-suited don via missions ranging from smuggling to assassination. Assisting your upward mobility are Tommy guns, knuckle-dusters, baseball bats and Molotov cocktails, but look out for the coppers, who'll haul you in for speeding, showing a weapon or all-around hooliganism. Fine "family" entertainment. ★★★★★

Blender Approved

The best games of the last three months



ENTER THE MATRIX

ATARI — XBOX, PS2, GAMECUBE, PC

The slo-mo chop-socky and gunplay are standard, but the mainframe hacking, movie footage and a Wachowski Brothers script give this game extra juice.



TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF L.A.

ACTIVISION — GAMECUBE, PS2, XBOX

Exact renegade justice in L.A.'s seedy underbelly with verbal assistance from Christopher Walken, Gary Oldman and other Hollywood tough guys.



WIN THIS SNOWBOARD!

Send your completed puzzle to
Blender Puzzle Contest, 1040 Avenue of the Americas,
22nd floor, New York, New York 10018.

➤➤ **WHAT'S THIS?** It's a **Sims Fader Series snowboard** featuring the lovely ladies of Vivid Video in all their glory! The boards come in several different sizes for a smooth, responsive ride. Just solve this puzzle, read the official rules at blender.com, cut out your completed version and send it to the address to the left. Make sure we get your answer and contact info by September 9, 2003. We'll pick a winner at random and post the winner's name at blender.com/crossword. Yes!

PENCIL ME IN!

Hey, it's *Blender's* crossword! Starring 15 Across! BY BRENDAN QUIGLEY

ACROSS

- 1 Proof there's life after Nirvana? (two words)
- 8 Garbage drummer ____ Vig
- 9 They've got a black magic woman
- 11 Conor Oberst's alter ego (two words)
- 12 Owners of a lonely heart
- 14 Neil Young: "____, take a look at my life" (two words)
- 15 Elvis Presley's middle name
- 17 "____ bird," frequently requested at concerts
- 18 Jackson sibling who posed for *Playboy*
- 20 The late Maurice Gibb was a Bee ____
- 21 Cry him a river
- 23 Twee pop band on Barsuk Records that's named for the year-end high-school dance (two words)
- 25 Costello, né Declan MacManus
- 27 Rockers who claim you bring them to life

DOWN

- 1 R&B duo with the 2003 hit "Say Yes"
- 2 Baby, he's got your money (abbr.)
- 3 They have 200 couches where you can sleep tonight
- 4 They're longer than singles but shorter than LPs
- 5 Cher's late ex
- 6 Trapt's stubborn hit
- 7 Ricky ____ lives la vida loca
- 10 Funky New Orleans bunch with whom Aaron Neville's career started (two words)
- 13 Black Sabbath's 1971 ode to marijuana (two words)
- 16 Eminem barred this satirist from making a video
- 17 These C&W Rascals love you out loud
- 19 She was Foxy in *Goldmember*
- 22 Donny Osmond's sister
- 24 "Lady Marmalade" chanteuse who has a fear of flying
- 26 Elvis's original label



19 Down



POP HISTORY! JULY 1971: Jim Morrison Gets Punk'd

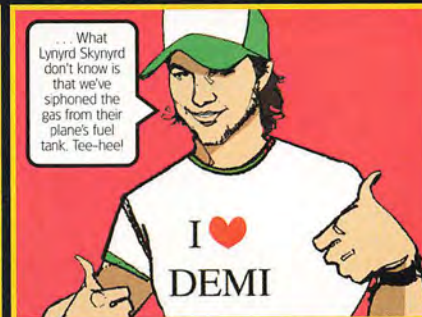
WRITTEN BY CLARK COLLIS. ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN JAY



↑ Jim Morrison was one of the first stars to appear on *Punk'd*, the MTV show fronted by Ashton Kutcher.



↑ Unfortunately, the Doors frontman's debut *Punk-ing* would also be his last.



↑ Following the incident, *Punk'd* was canceled, only to return in the fall of 1977.

➔ He's the 40-year-old neohippie Londoner who loves technology, Jennifer Connelly and a certain dirty word. None of which really answers the question . . .

BY ROB TANNENBAUM
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN

WHO DOES **SEAL** THINK HE IS?

It looks like you put a lot of work into your drawing.

I really didn't want to do it, but I ended up enjoying it. The computer represents my obsession with technology, and the sun and star in the background represent a feeling of always being distant. I'm not depressed or anything, but for the most part, I do feel as though I'm on the outside, looking in.

Where do you think that feeling comes from?

From being treated that way as a child and feeling detached from everyone around me. I had an estranged relationship

with my father. I was always the odd one out at school. Therein lies the motivation for success: If you had a difficult childhood, then you grow up with a point to prove. [Laughs] Maybe I owe my entire success to all those kids who were really mean to me at school.

If you were a woman, who would you want to be?

Jennifer Connelly, because she's staggeringly beautiful and equally talented. Then I'd go have sex with all my friends.

What's your favorite curse word?

Fuck. It can be a very powerful word. It's strong, it's weak, it's sexual, it's everything. Phonetically, it feels nice to say. But it's overused — particularly by myself.

What is the worst job that you've ever had?

I worked at McDonald's for two weeks when I was about 17. I couldn't quite come to terms with the shit-brown-colored uniforms.

What do women want?

Wow. Therein lies the million-dollar

question. They want honesty, fidelity, masculinity and sensitivity. But God, if I knew the answer to that, I'd probably be married.

Describe yourself physically.

Imposing but gentle. I'm six-four, and I have a very distinctive look. [Points to face] These scars add to this imposing quality I can have on people who don't know me.

How would you describe your taste in sex?

Oh, my God, what kind of interview is this? My taste in sex is regular and powerful.

What do you mean by powerful?

Intoxicating and engaging, to a point where it takes you over. That's the kind of sex I like to have. Now ask me if I always get that.

Do you always get that?

No! [Laughs] It's impossible to get that on a regular basis. The other person has to be fully cognizant of what it is you're trying to achieve — and willing to go there with you.

Name a song that makes you cry.

I remember having tears in my eyes when I heard "God Give Me Strength," the Elvis Costello/Burt Bacharach song. And at the end of *The Pianist*, the movie about this Polish Jew in the second World War hiding from the Germans — he plays this piece, Chopin's "Grande Polonaise"; I was in a flood of tears.

Who was the last person you punched?

When I was about 13 at school, I kicked this guy called Justin Thomas. He was a guy who everyone picked on — maybe he reminded me of myself, of how sappy I was. If you happen to read this by some miracle, I apologize, Justin. Please know it has tortured me for the last 28 years.

So who does Seal think he is?

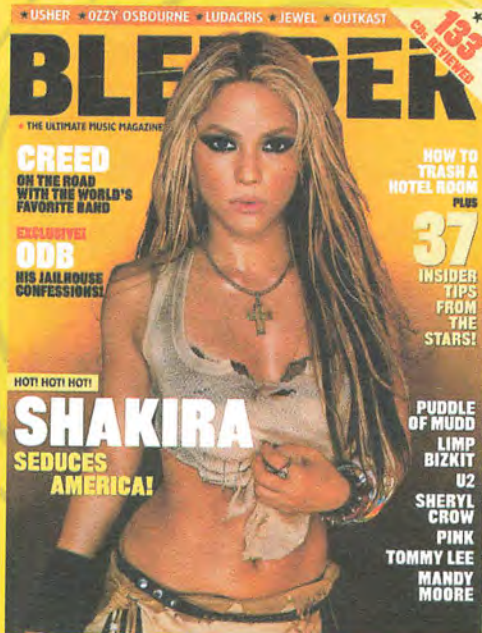
The loneliest star. I feel that I'm shining ever so brightly, from a distance. Actually, no — that's all complete bullshit. It sounds a bit pathetic. Who do I think I am? I think I'm the messenger.

And what's the message?

Peace. [BLENDER]



"I was always the odd one out at school."



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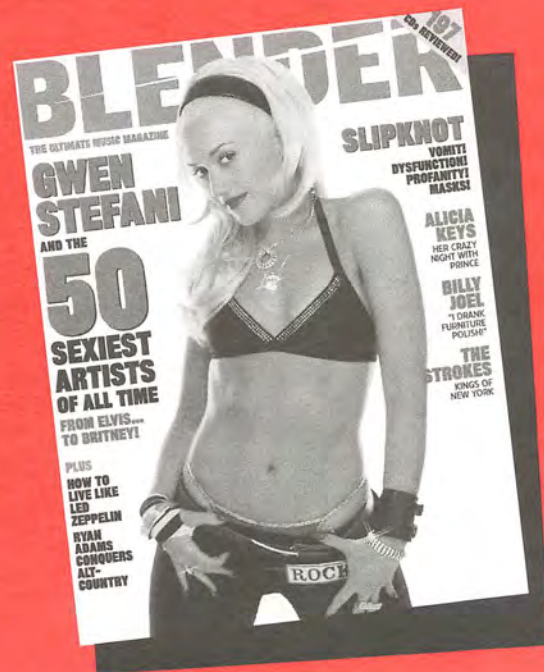
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"When you make your mark, make sure it means something" ... State of Grace.

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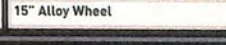
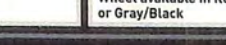
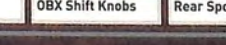
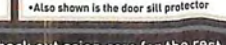
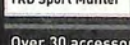
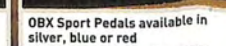
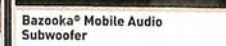
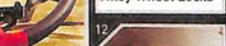
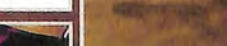
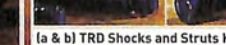
"My reality is greater than the sum of its parts"
...LJ



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Scion By Rudy, Police Photographer

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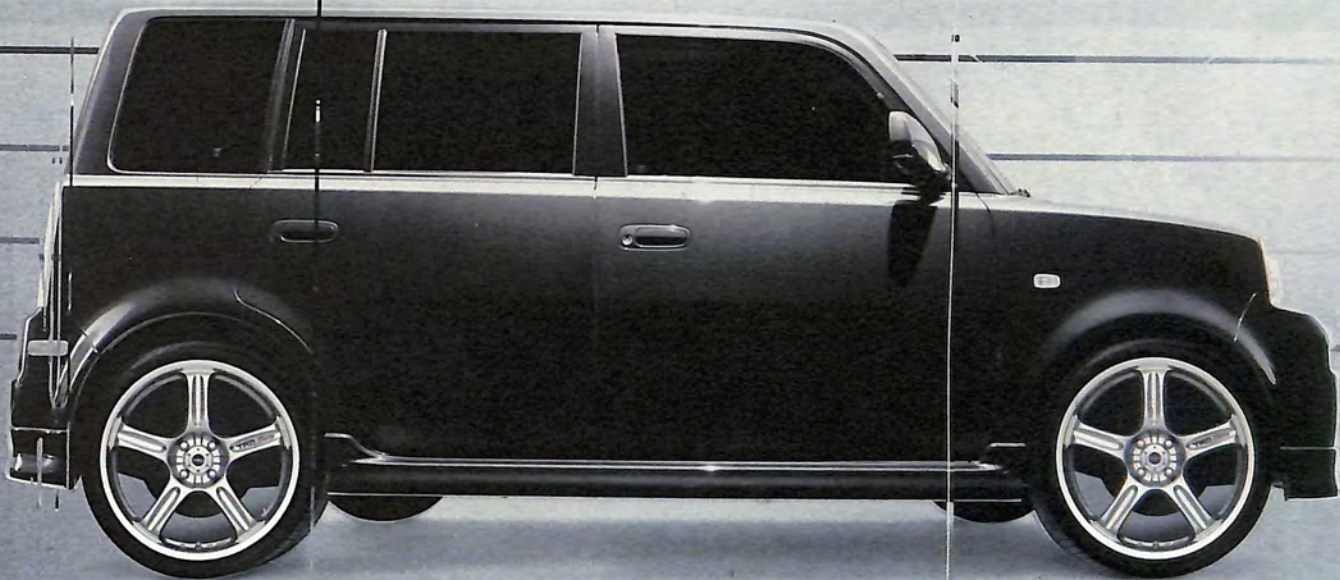
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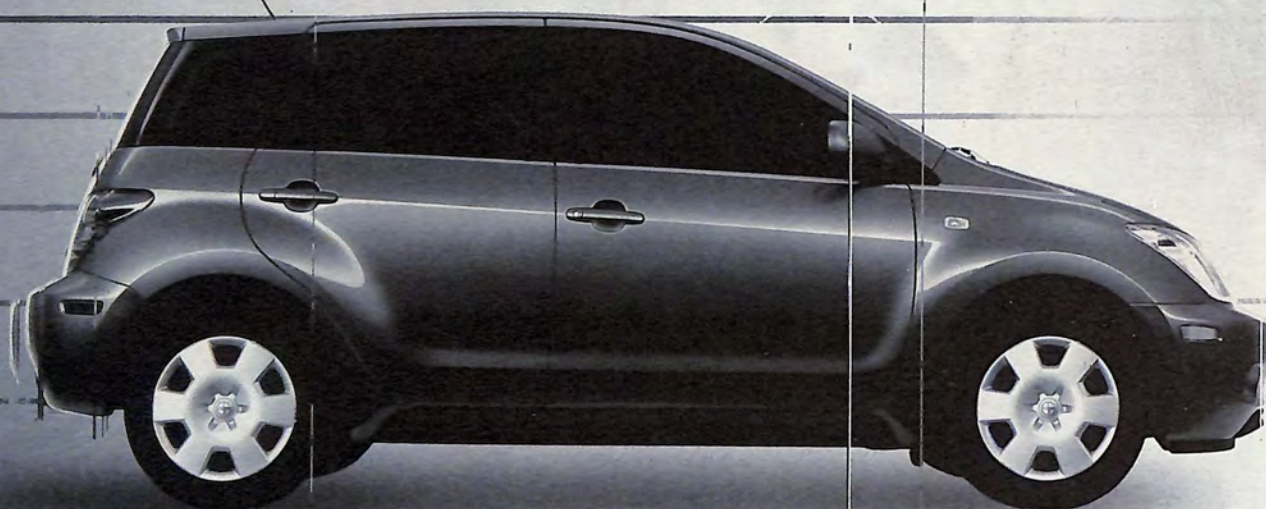
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"In my line of work, I always remember the originals" ... Rudy.



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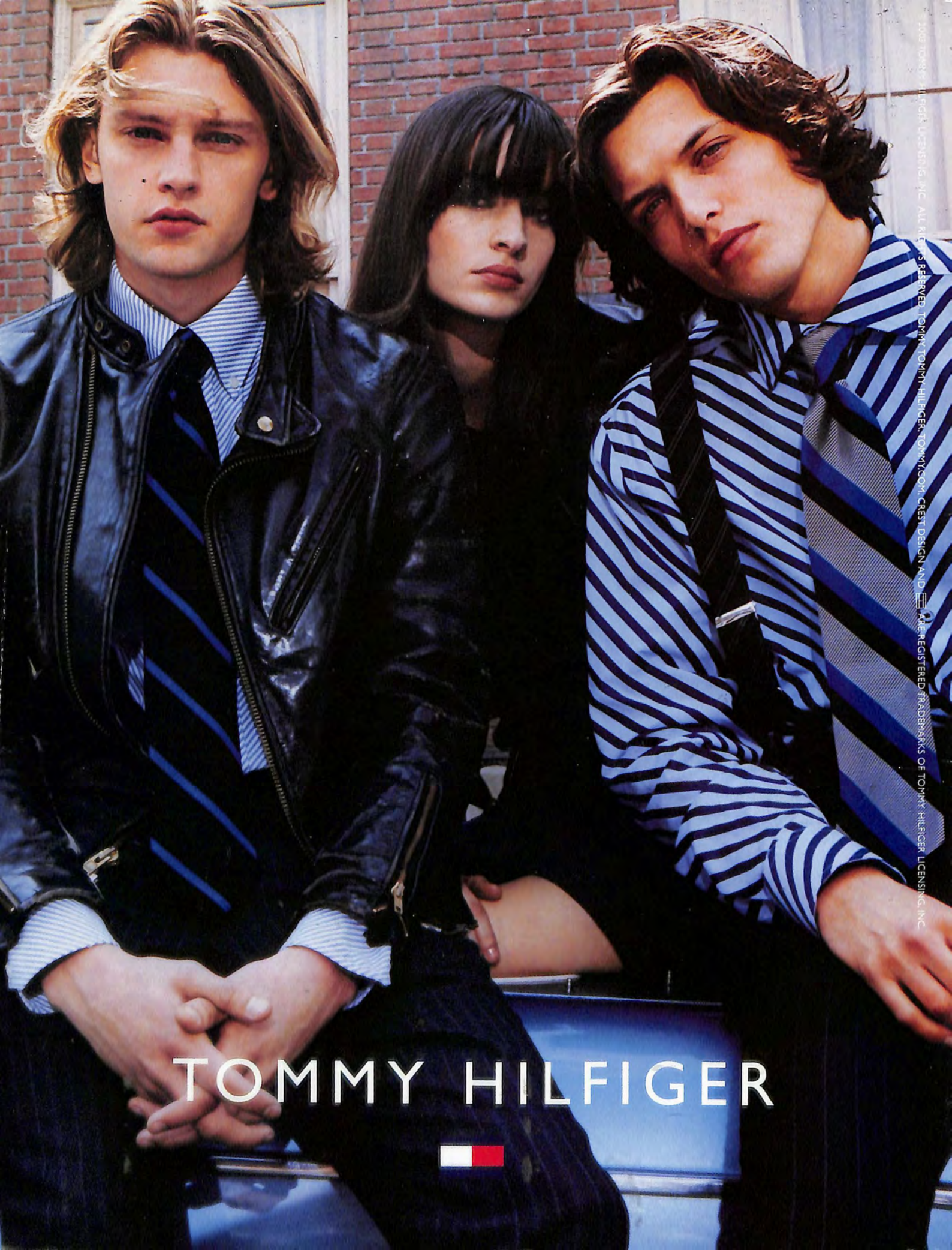


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